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ABSTRACT

This publication provides teachers with a practical resource of information on the early history, cultural heritage, and traditions of Native people in Manitoba. Sections 1 and 2 draw from archeological evidence and oral tradition, respectively, to present two different perspectives on the origins and lifeways of early peoples. The academic historical account covers: (1) settlement of Manitoba by waves of migrating peoples from 11,000 to 1,000 years ago, early technical innovations, trade networks, and early agriculture; (2) relationships among the Cree, Assiniboine, Dene, and Inuit in the early postcontact period; (3) the fur trade and the buffalo hunt; (4) treaties; and (5) changing Native societies in the 1800s. Oral tradition includes mythology, which explains the origins of things, and legends featuring human beings in more mundane situations, such as migration. Sections 3 and 4 look at material artifacts, music, and dance as reflections of the values, beliefs, relationships, and activities of the people who crafted them. Material culture includes stone and copper artifacts, ceramics, paintings, birch bark biting, quillwork, beadwork, and woodland style art. Contains over 150 references and many maps, photographs, and drawings. (SV)

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REACHING FOR THE SUN

A GUIDE TO THE EARLY HISTORY AND THE CULTURAL TRADITIONS OF NATIVE PEOPLE IN MANITOBA

1993

ED 365 505

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COVER: The sun, according to a story of Dene people in Manitoba, hid itself from the world and threatened to freeze humanity. When a young Dene girl found the sun trapped in her snare, she and her brother agree to free it on one condition: the sun must resume its course, lengthen the days and restore warmth to the earth. See page 41.

This publication is also available in French.

Acknowledgements

The **Native People of Manitoba** Project Committee consisted of Ken Paupanekis, Frontier School Division; Marshall Murdock, Winnipeg School Division No. 1; George Desnomie, Manitoba Indian Education Association; Frank Lagorio, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada; and Diane Cooley, Manitoba Education and Training.

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Foreword

Reaching for the Sun provides a practical resource of information on the early history, cultural heritage, and traditions of Native people in Manitoba. Apart from its role in education, this publication is at the forefront of helping to build bridges of understanding of the many dimensions and diversity of people in Manitoba.

The purpose of **Reaching for the Sun: A Guide to the Early History and Cultural Traditions of Native People in Manitoba** is two-fold: to augment the pictures and captions contained in the poster series, **Native People of Manitoba,** and to broaden readers' information base on Native Manitoba history, material culture, crafts, art, music, dance, and folklore by providing information on topics and themes. **Reaching for the Sun** includes four sections

- **Beginnings: A Historical Sketch of Native People in Manitoba**
- **Stories: An Oral Tradition Provides Tales of Wonder**
- **Made By Hand: Artistic Heritage and Continuing Tradition**
- **Music and Dance: Fiddles, Drums, and Dances Create Dynamic Cultural Activities**

Sections 1 and 2 – **Beginnings** and **Stories** – draw from archaeological evidence and oral tradition, respectively, to present two different perspectives on the origins and lifeways of early peoples in Manitoba.

Sections 3 and 4 – **Made By Hand** and **Music and Dance** – look at artifacts, both material and non-material, as reflections of the values, beliefs, relationships, and activities of the people who crafted them.

Reaching for the Sun is a tribute to the province's first peoples, and it draws upon the combined efforts of Native writers, artists, educators, and researchers.

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BEGINNINGS

A HISTORICAL SKETCH OF NATIVE PEOPLE IN MANITOBA

Precontact Era

Introduction

There are two different accounts of the precontact era of Native history in Manitoba: the traditional and the academic. The traditional version developed by Native people was passed down from generation to generation, mainly by word of mouth. The academic version, the product of the science of archaeology, has been written largely by non-Native scholars.

A traditional account of Manitoba precontact history is presented in Section 2, **Stories**. The academic account is reflected in **Beginnings**. For convenience, the history is divided into sequential parts: Early, Middle, and Late Precontact periods.

Early Precontact Period (11,500 – 7500 Years Ago)

Twelve thousand years ago, Manitoba was buried beneath an Ice Age glacier that covered most of what is now Canada, and no part of the province was open to human habitation. Shortly afterward, however, gradual melting of the edges of the ice sheet left the extreme southwestern corner exposed. Lakes, fed by water from the melting ice, flooded large tracts of this deglaciated landscape. As the northern ice front melted, glacial lakes inundated more and more terrain. The largest glacial lake, Lake Agassiz, remained for several thousand years and covered the flat country east of the Manitoba Escarpment.

The First Manitobans

The northward retreat of the massive ice sheet and the recession of Glacial Lake Agassiz made southern Manitoba suitable for human habitation. Archaeological evidence indicates that the first Manitobans entered the province west of the Manitoba Escarpment about 11,500 years ago. These people, organized in small groups of related families, supported themselves by hunting animals and by gathering wild plants.

From studies conducted throughout North America, archaeologists have learned that their food resources included now-extinct big-game animals – mammoths, mastodons, big-horned bison, and varieties of camels and horses. Freed from the grip of the ice sheet, southern Manitoba was a formidable environment that failed to attract animals in large numbers. Not surprisingly, hunters and their families, dependent on them for food, found the region far from an ideal hunting ground. As a result, they visited the area infrequently or in small numbers.

By about 8000 BC, however, the warming trend ended the Ice Age and produced rich grasslands in southern Manitoba west of Lake Agassiz. This grass provided a bountiful supply of food for bison roaming over much of the mid-continent. The abundance of game, and perhaps the increasing frequency of droughts on the central North American plains, induced increasing numbers of hunters to settle in southern Manitoba. They made effective use of their environment. They fashioned tools and implements from wood, bone, antler, and a variety of flint-like stones.

Apart from being the mainstay of their diet, bison also provided hides for clothing and coverings for dwellings. Relying on migratory animals for survival, people patterned their movements on the seasonal rounds of herds. In summer, bison fed on the lush grasses of the open prairie. The coming of cold weather forced the bison to move to the forest edge and river valleys in search of food and shelter from winter winds. The people followed the animals and took advantage of opportunities for hunting provided by the changing of the seasons. This big-game hunting tradition persisted on the grasslands of southern Manitoba for thousands of years.

Middle Precontact Period (7500 – 2500 Years Ago)

Between 9300 and 7500 years ago, Glacial Lake Agassiz gradually diminished and finally disappeared, along with the remnants of the once-massive ice sheet. Grasslands expanded into the former lake basin in southern Manitoba, and the boreal forest became established in the ice- and lake-free expanses of the Canadian Shield. People moving in from the south and west explored these regions and eventually settled.

On the expanding grasslands, the bison-hunting lifeway established by earlier people continued. In the forests of eastern and northern Manitoba, however, a somewhat different way of life developed. Unlike their bison-hunting counterparts on the plains, early inhabitants of the shield country depended on a diverse array of forest animals, fish, birds, and plants.

As the country became the permanent homeland of these first nations, they began introducing technological innovations. Evidence suggests that in the North these people invented snowshoes and the

toboggan during the Middle Precontact Period. The nature of their environment probably led them to adopt a way of life similar to the northern Cree who first encountered European explorers of the region thousands of years later.

Early Technical Innovations

The earliest evidence of technological innovations found in Manitoba dates back to the Middle Precontact Period. Artifacts made of copper, mainly spear points, have been found throughout the southern boreal forest, particularly along the Winnipeg River and in the grassland and aspen parkland regions. Since the natural sources of the copper ore existed around the shores of Lake Superior rather than in Manitoba, it is clear that early settlements contacted distant peoples. Findings in southeastern Manitoba, at least as early as 2000 BC, indicate people imported copper nuggets and made tools.

Northern Manitoba Settlement

During the Middle Precontact Period, people settled in the northernmost reaches of Manitoba. About 4000 years ago, a people whose origins lay far to the northwest of Siberia and Alaska, made their way eastward along the frozen shores of the Arctic Ocean. They hunted whales, seals, and walrus, and sometimes ventured inland to hunt caribou. Archaeologists describe their culture as the Arctic Small Tool Tradition because of the minute, delicately made stone implements they fashioned.

Only a few places in Manitoba have produced evidence of these people. The main sites are in the Churchill area, but other campsites have been discovered at Shamattawa, Southern Indian Lake, and Rock Lake, north of Thompson. People at the inland sites, far from the Hudson Bay coast, fished and hunted caribou. Some of the sites in the Churchill district are also the remnants of caribou hunters' camps, but other sites relate to a coast-oriented way of life where seals and other marine animals, rather than caribou, were the main source of food.

Late Precontact Period (2500 – 350 Years Ago) Southern Settlement

By about 500 BC the climate of central North America began to change. Rainfall was more abundant, summers became cooler and shorter, more snow fell and storms became more frequent during

the winter months. The boreal forest expanded, displacing the edge of the grassland to the south and west. Bison, and the people who hunted them, shifted their ranges. As the eastern forests continued expanding westward, people from the upper Great Lakes region moved into southern Manitoba. Already adapted to a forested environment, they took full advantage of food resources from the lakes and streams. Following their predecessors, they relied on a wide variety of plants, animals, birds, and fish as sources of food. In addition, they began harvesting wild rice, a plant that from then on figured prominently in the Native economy.

The newcomers introduced a number of important technological innovations: the birch-bark canoe, the bow and arrow, and fired-clay pottery. These developments led to a large, stable population closely attuned to life in the forest. In the parklands and prairie west of the Whiteshell, their descendants constructed bison-drive lanes, bison pounds, and burial mounds. Trading supplemented the goods and provisions they acquired from southern Manitoba's rich natural environment. Imports included pipestone from southwestern Minnesota, shells from the Gulf of Mexico and British Columbia, obsidian from Wyoming, copper from the mines and quarries around Lake Superior, and brown chalcedony or Knife River flint from North Dakota.

Trade Networks

Exposure to new people, customs and ideas, resulting from these far-reaching trade networks, led to another major change in the lives of southern Manitoba's Late Precontact peoples – the development of agriculture. For centuries, inhabitants of the Red River Valley traded with the settled, village-dwelling, farming societies of the American Midwest and the Dakotas. Inevitably, these contacts gave rise to intermarriage, and southern women came north to Manitoba with their new husbands.

Early Agriculture

Virtually all the activities related to traditional Native agriculture are associated with women: the nurturing of crops, the excavation of underground silos for the storage of the harvest, and the grinding of the meal. Once in Manitoba, they simply continued to pursue daily tasks they learned from mothers and grandmothers. These southern women, married into the communities of hunters living in the Red

River Valley, introduced farming to the region, several centuries before European contact.

Who were the people that called southern Manitoba home in precontact times? It is believed that certain nations, notably the Atsina (Gros Ventre), Hidatsa, Assiniboine, and Blackfoot, once lived in the region before moving westward in Late Precontact times. Cree people, throughout most of the Late Precontact era, inhabited the forested country of central and northern Manitoba. The Caribou Eater Dene moved into the northern transition zone from the western subarctic after the time of Christ, to pursue a way of life closely tied to the annual cycles and movements of the barren-ground caribou.

Thule Migrate to Hudson Bay

The windswept shores of Hudson Bay, about 1,000 years ago, witnessed another wave of immigrants from the far northwest. After arriving, the newcomers absorbed the people of the Arctic Small Tool Tradition. The newcomers, known to archaeologists as Thule ("Too-ley"), were the direct ancestors of the Inuit who encountered the Europeans when they set foot in northern Manitoba in the early 17th century.

Postcontact Era

Early Postcontact Period (1650 to 1733)

Cree Contacts

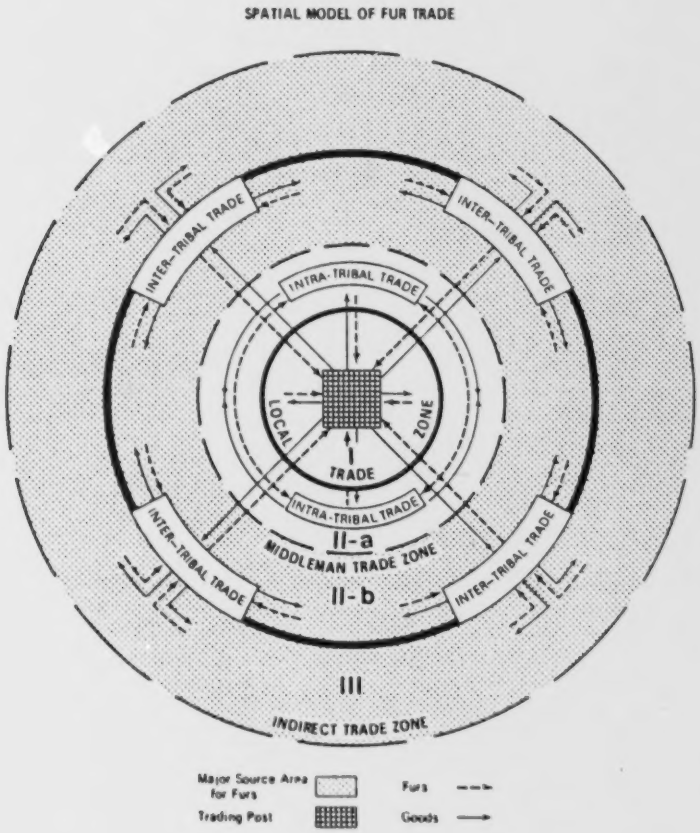
By definition, the Precontact Era ended when Native people came face-to-face with Europeans. However, this contact took place at different times in different parts of what is now Manitoba. The first Native Manitobans ever to witness a white person were probably the Cree who encountered Pierre Radisson on the Hayes River in the early 1680s. Further contacts between Native peoples and Europeans came after Henry Kelsey's journey through central Manitoba in 1690, while the first recorded contact between the two races in southern Manitoba took place when Pierre de la Verendrye arrived in 1733.

The Early Postcontact Period in southern Manitoba is characterized by the acquisition of European trade goods prior to their arrival in the area. For example, European goods entered the lands of the Assiniboine of southern Manitoba almost a full century before the arrival of la Verendrye. Therefore, during the last 100 years or so of the Late Precontact Period in southern Manitoba, Native people's material culture included artifacts of European origin. Assiniboine middlemen made this possible by acquiring trade goods from Cree and Ojibwe on the Great Lakes, transporting them inland to central and southern Manitoba, and trading them to local Native people. For a while, Native Manitobans obtained second-hand and third-hand European trade goods even though no trading posts existed in Manitoba.

Three Trade Zones

This situation changed with the establishment of the Hudson's Bay Company in 1670 and the subsequent construction of York Factory near the mouth of the Nelson River in 1684; the first fur-trade post to be built on Manitoba soil. Its presence gave rise to three trade zones – local, middleman, and indirect as indicated in the illustration above and the map on the opposite page. The local area, occupied by Swampy Cree, known as Home Guard Indians, provided the post with wild foods obtained by hunting. Other occupations included acting as packeteers and providing wage labour. The trapping of animals for fur became this group's secondary activity.

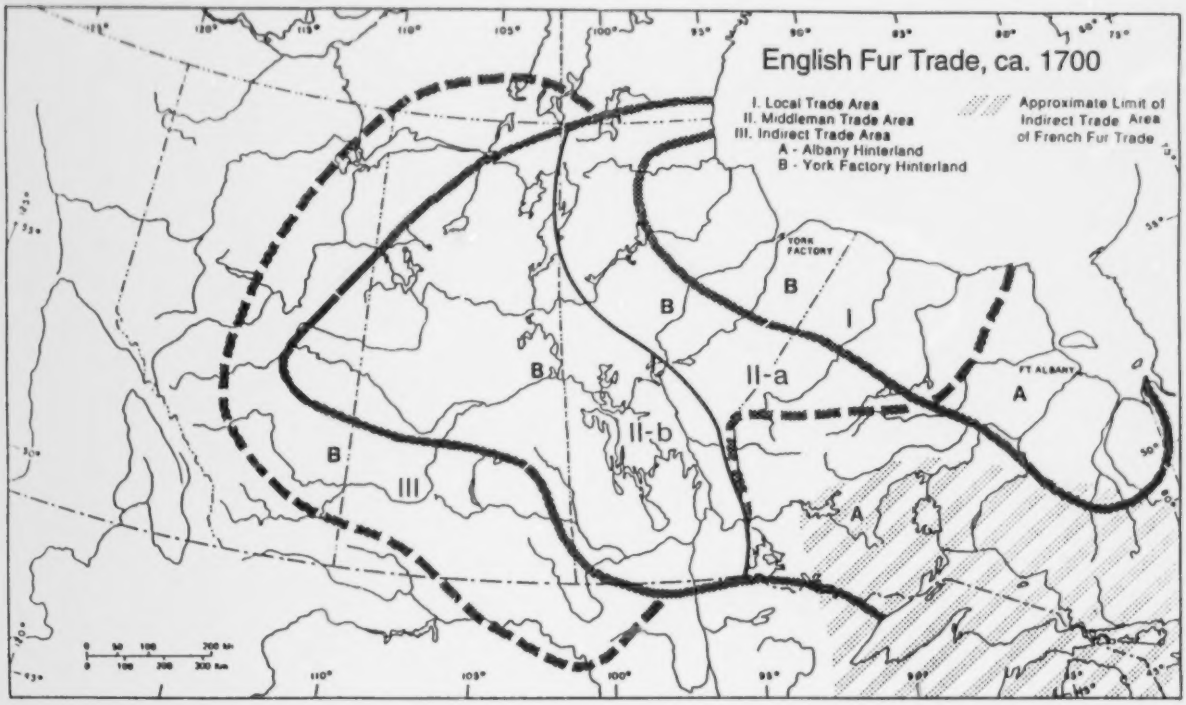
In the middleman trade area the Western Cree and Assiniboine occupants trapped for furs that Indian middlemen transported to York Factory. In much the same way as the Home Guard Cree, the



The fur trade of the Early Postcontact Period is divided into the three trade zones, the movement of goods and furs, and intra- and inter-tribal trade.

middlemen gained direct contact with the English traders at York Factory. In contrast, the Natives of the indirect trade zone, Blackfoot, Gros Ventre, and Dene, located far to the west and southwest of York Factory and well beyond the borders of Manitoba, rarely came in contact with Europeans. They relied on the Western Cree and Assiniboine middlemen for supplies of trade goods.

Source: Heidenreich, C., and Ray, A. *The Early Fur Trades: A Study in Cultural Interaction*. McClelland and Stewart Ltd., 1976.



English and French fur trade activities divide the western interior into three regions.

Source: Heidenreich, C., and Ray, A. *The Early Fur Trades: A Study in Cultural Interaction*. McClelland and Stewart, 1976.

Cree – Assiniboine Relationships

The relationship between the Cree and Assiniboine in southern Manitoba during the Early Postcontact Period is an interesting story. Initially, the Assiniboine belonged to the Yanktonai Dakota nation, whose members lived in Minnesota.

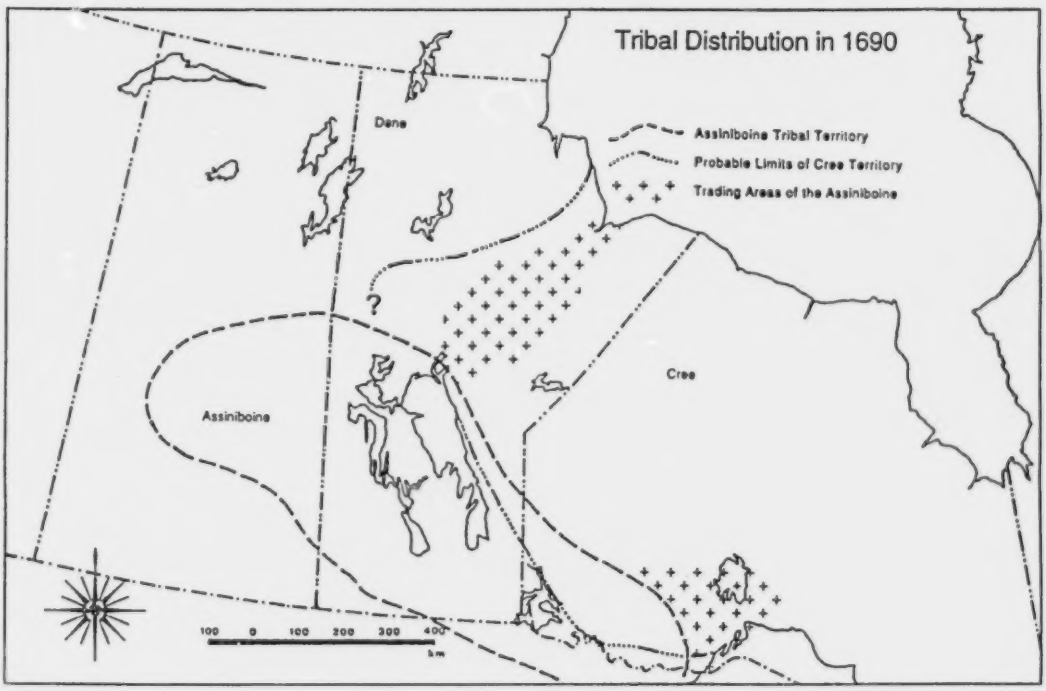
Some time prior to 1640, a number of them broke away from the main group and in due course migrated to southern Manitoba. They became closely involved with the resident Cree, and eventually there emerged three distinguishable types of relationships, based on the kind and degree of interaction.

- **alliance** – with the Cree and Assiniboine allied and bilingual, while at the same time retaining distinctive identities

- **intermarriage and multicultural** – involving intermarriage and co-residence
- **fused ethnicity** – or a culturally hybrid community that became neither Assiniboine nor Cree, but an amalgamation or blending of the two to form yet a third distinct type

Territorial Expansion

Territorial expansion became an important aspect of western Cree and Assiniboine experience during the Early Postcontact period. Throughout this time, these nations gradually expanded westward and northwestward well beyond the borders of Manitoba. See the map below. In so doing, they reinforced their middleman function



During the Early Postcontact period, the Dene, Cree and Assiniboine nations control vast areas.

Source: Ray, A. *Indians in the Fur Trade: Their Role as Hunters, Trappers and Middlemen in the Lands Southwest of Hudson Bay 1660-1870.* University of Toronto Press, 1974.

and took control of most of York Factory's trade. It may well have been the successful expansion of the Assiniboine-Cree "confederacy" in Late Precontact times that caused the westward and southward displacement of the Blackfoot, Arapaho, Hidatsa and Dakota from southern Manitoba. Military pressure, placed on these nations by the Cree and Assiniboine, facilitated by the latter's direct and sustained access to English guns and ammunition, maintained their middleman monopoly.

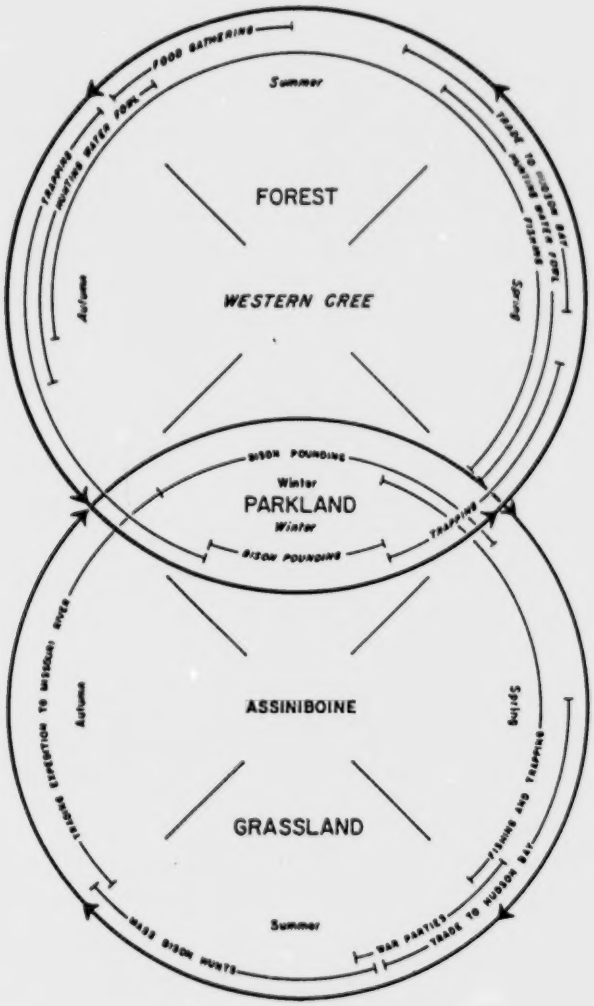
As old animosities persisted between the Assiniboine and their relatives to the south, conflict between the Cree-Assiniboine alliance and the Dakota continued throughout the Postcontact Period.

Life Zones

Another interesting aspect of the Western Cree-Assiniboine occupation of the southern half of Manitoba during this period was the respective and complementary adaptations to the existing "life zones" of the region. Southerly bands of Cree inhabited the forested areas in the spring, summer, and fall, and shifted into the aspen parkland in the winter. The Assiniboine ranged about the grasslands during the summer and then moved into the parklands in the fall, winter, and spring.

The reasons for these movements lie with the availability of food and the ways people adapted to the changing seasons. In the southern boreal forest, people gathered most of the food in late spring, early and late summer, and early fall. During this time, people harvested abundant wildfowl and fish. The reverse was the case during the winter months; the area was all but abandoned by wildfowl by mid-October, and falling temperatures caused the fish to seek out deeper waters in the lakes. In January, February, and March, the people were confronted with the threat of starvation. Even the big game – moose and woodland caribou – were widely dispersed due to the relatively low edible foliage of the boreal forest.

This resulted in the Cree moving to the aspen parklands during the winter. In winter, the parklands became comparatively productive because bison summered on the open prairies to the south and west and moved into the park areas for food and shelter. Food



Cree and Assiniboine adaptations to the southern boreal forest, aspen parkland, and grassland of the west during the Early and Middle Postcontact periods. The overlap in the parkland during the winter consolidated good relations between the two nations throughout the Postcontact period.

Source: Ray, A. *Indians in the Fur Trade: Their Role as Hunters, Trappers and Middlemen in the Lands Southwest of Hudson Bay 1660-1870.* University of Toronto Press, 1974.

resources, therefore, were plentiful in the parklands precisely at the time of year when they became scarce in the adjoining boreal forest, except during mild winters, when the bison tended to remain on open grasslands.

Under normal circumstances, Native people lived off the grasslands during summers and mild winters when large numbers of bison, along with other big-game species, such as elk, pronghorn antelope, and mule deer populated the area. The response to these changing seasonal circumstances by the Cree and Assiniboine of Manitoba during both the Early and Middle Precontact periods is shown on page 13.

The Dene

The Dene, a migratory people, lived for the most part in small family bands along the fringes of the northern transitional forest. They relied on caribou for food, clothing and shelter, and followed the seasonal movements of the herds, spending winters in the boreal forest and summers on the tundra. The Caribou Eater Dene became the most numerous, and the most easterly, of the Athapaskan-speaking people in the 18th century.

Unlike the Cree and Assiniboine to the south, the Caribou Eater Dene remained marginal to the fur trade. In their northern area, relatively unproductive of fur bearing animals, caribou provided for most of their needs. The Hudson's Bay Company, however, established Fort Churchill in 1717 at the mouth of the Churchill River to exploit the resources, including reported mineral riches, of the western subarctic. Similar to Native peoples to the south, the Dene of the Early Postcontact Period served as middlemen in the fur trade between the HBC and nations situated far into the interior, notably the Yellowknife and Dogrib.

The Inuit
Thule-Inuit Connections

The Inuit who traded with the HBC post at Churchill, occupied a territory approximately 200 kilometres to 300 kilometres north of the post, along the west side of Hudson Bay, from the treeline to Chesterfield Inlet. These Inuit, now known as Caribou Inuit, constitute one of the five major Inuit groups considered to belong to the fourth and final stage in Canadian Inuit history, the Central Inuit.

The development of the Central Inuit can be dated from the 18th century; their genetic and cultural heritage is based on the Thule people. The major difference between Thule and Inuit cultures lies in the Inuit adaptations that resulted from the decline of whaling, the economic mainstay of the Thule culture, due to the introduction of European goods and ideas, and a cooler, harsher climate.

The Caribou Inuit, as the name suggests, developed a heavy reliance on the barren-ground caribou, leaving behind the marine-oriented economy of their Thule ancestors. The majority of Caribou Inuit hunted inland and used caribou for

- meat for food
- skins to make clothing, tent and kayak covers
- sinew for thread
- bone and antler for scrapers, arrowheads, needles, and snowknives

The remaining Caribou Inuit – the ones who did not rely strictly on hunting caribou – restricted their sea hunting to the summer season only.

Inuit occupation of the Churchill area immediately predated that of the HBC; Governor James Knight arrived in 1717, and saw a settlement of sod houses. Knight noted: "I observ'd upon the outer point of the River as wee came in an abundance of Iskemays [Eskimo] tents standing that it looked like a town...." The establishment of the HBC trading post in 1717 saw the beginning of regular contact between Inuit and whites.

Note: The posters do not reflect the contribution of Inuit people to Manitoba's history.

Middle Postcontact Period (1734 –1820)

Fur Forts

The establishment of fur trade posts in the interior of Manitoba, specifically, the construction of forts Maurepas, Rouge and La Reine on the Red and Assiniboine rivers by la Verendrye between 1734 and 1738, marked the end of the Early Postcontact Period, see map on page 17. Located in the middleman trade zone, the French intended to intercept the Western Cree and Assiniboine traders en

route to the English posts on Hudson Bay. Accordingly, many of the Cree and Assiniboine traded their best furs to the French and consigned the rest to those Indians who continued to deal with the English on the Bay. This state prevailed until the French left the region in the mid-1750s.

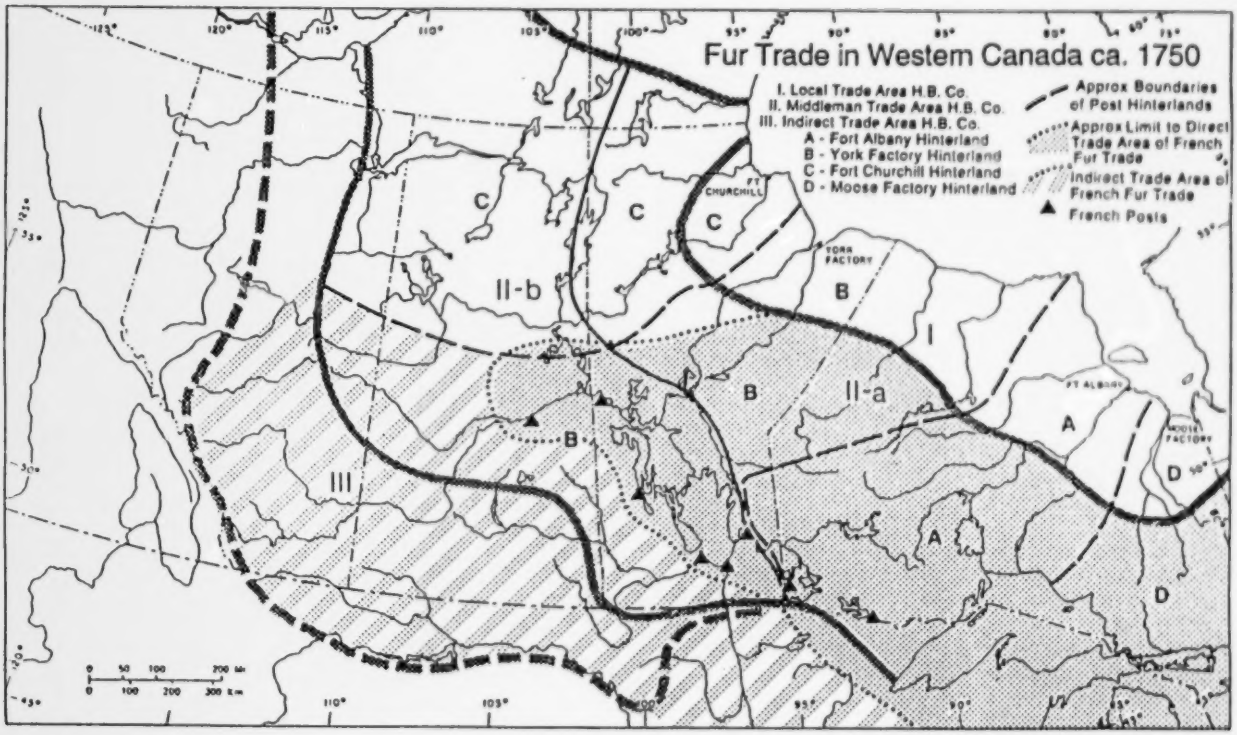
The establishment of French trading posts in the HBC's hinterland signalled the beginning of the end of the middleman status enjoyed by the Assiniboine and Cree during the Early Postcontact Period. When the French withdrew, Montreal traders replaced them a decade or so later. Similar to the French, they attempted to cut off the Indian trade with the HBC at York Factory.

As competition increased, between 1763 and 1800, the number of posts in central and southern Manitoba rose sharply. This increase squeezed out the Assiniboine and Cree, who no longer operated as middlemen as they had to compete with other groups to acquire the same goods from posts situated in the forests and parklands of southern Manitoba and adjacent Saskatchewan.

The proliferation of fur-trade posts in the continental interior, however, created other opportunities for resident Native people. These posts needed steady supplies of food. The Cree and Assiniboine, former middlemen in the Bay trade, turned to provisioning the inland posts, mainly with bison meat and pemmican. This activity drew the Manitoba Assiniboine and the Cree gradually westward to the prime bison ranges of Saskatchewan, indicated on the map on page 18.

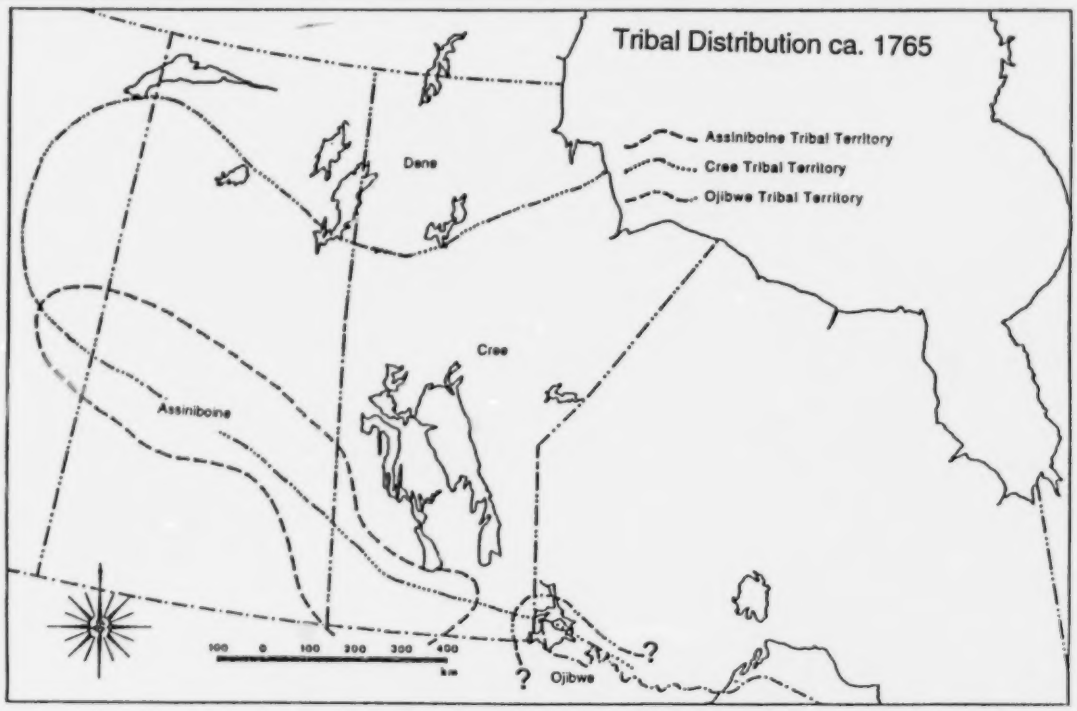
The arrival of the horse, which began to appear on the eastern Canadian plains in the mid-1770s, made new methods of buffalo hunting possible. In southern Manitoba, the Cree and Assiniboine were replaced by bands of Ojibwe and Ottawa who had been encouraged by the traders to move into the area because of their expertise as fur trappers. In addition to hunting and trapping skills, the Ojibwe and Ottawa also brought with them maple sugaring and horticulture. By the end of the Middle Postcontact Period (ca. 1820), the Ojibwe were clearly the dominant Indian nation in the southern half of Manitoba. See map on page 19.

As competition accelerated during the Middle Postcontact Period, North West Company and Hudson's Bay Company posts proliferated the central forested region of Manitoba. Over-hunting and trapping resulted in a decline of furbearers and big game such as moose and woodland caribou. The latter sustained the trading post personnel, Native employees, and the fur brigades that brought supplies into the region and took the furs out. This depletion of natural resources led to the westward migration of the Swampy Cree during the late 18th and early 19th centuries. A smallpox epidemic in 1781, which is estimated to have killed between one-half



The French expanded direct and indirect spheres of influence at the expense of the two major English posts at York Factory and Churchill. Compare this map to the one on page 10.

Source: Heidenreich, C., and Ray, A. *The Early Fur Trades: A Study in Cultural Interaction.* McClelland and Stewart, 1976.



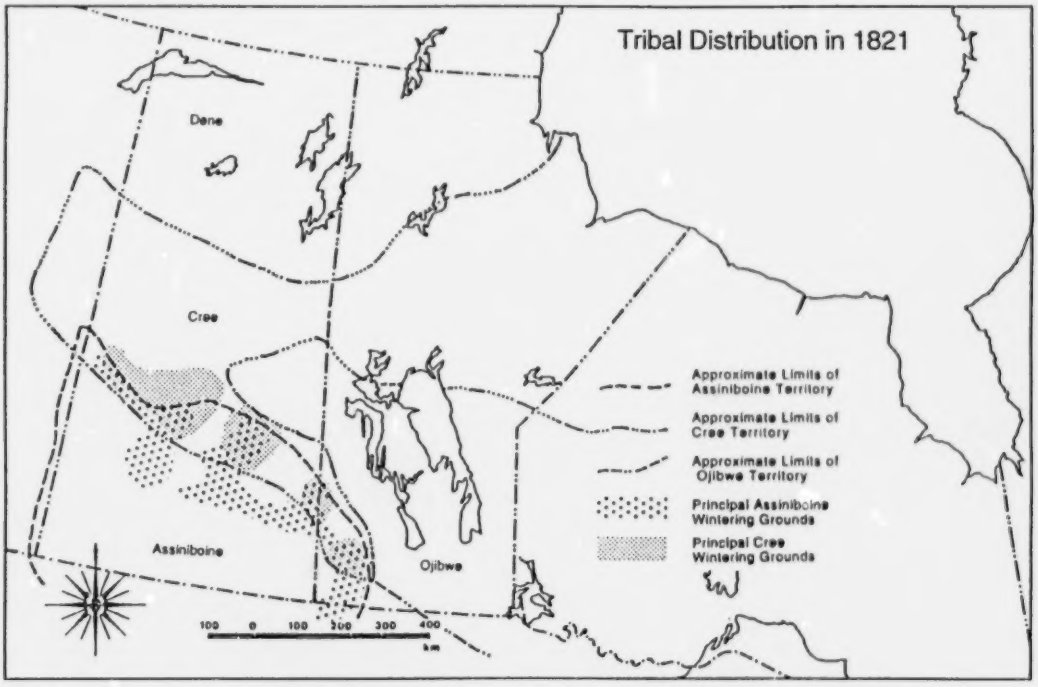
The Dene, Cree, and Ojibwe nations expand their territories in the west. The gradual departure of the Assiniboine from Manitoba is already underway.

and three-fifths of the resident Assiniboine and Cree, contributed further to regional depopulation. It also stimulated the movement of forest-dwelling Cree to the western plains.

Cree at Fort Churchill

Native trade into Fort Churchill initially included both Northern Dene and Southern Cree nations. The Cree of the Hudson Bay area, a migratory hunting people, lived in small family bands. While contact with fur traders brought major changes to their way of life, they never traded at Churchill in large numbers. Most of the Cree, who did trade at Fort Churchill, were Home Guard Indians who lived near the post. In 1782-83, as many as 69 Home Guard Cree traded at Fort Churchill. This Cree population generally declined

Source: Ray, A. *Indians in the Fur Trade: Their Role as Hunters, Trappers and Middlemen in the Lands Southwest of Hudson Bay 1660-1870.* University of Toronto Press, 1974.



At the beginning of the Late Postcontact period, the Ojibwe form the dominant Aboriginal population in southern Manitoba.

through the next few decades until 1857, when the remaining two families of Cree at Fort Churchill left for good, bound for York Factory. This essentially ended any major Cree presence at Fort Churchill.

Dene at Fort Churchill

The Dene trade into Fort Churchill far exceeded the Cree trade both in numbers and importance. The Dene acquired firearms and iron goods from Fort Churchill, and became middlemen in the fur trade. The Dene traders are distinguished by two types

- **"Faraway" Dene**, who would trade once a year, coming from distant places such as Lake Athabasca
- **Home Guard Dene**, who lived close to the post and came in twice a year to trade

Source: Ray, A. *Indians in the Fur Trade: Their Role as Hunters, Trappers and Middlemen in the Lands Southwest of Hudson Bay 1660-1870*. University of Toronto Press, 1974.

In the 1740s, over 200 Dene hunters traded at Fort Churchill. This level of interaction soon began to alter the Dene way of life as guns, ammunition, and other trade goods became common. The Home Guard Dene would start a typical seasonal round during this period by walking to the post in May with the proceeds of the winter hunt. After camping in the area and joining the post's spring goose hunt, they would leave to go north to hunt caribou. They returned to Fort Churchill in the fall to trade the caribou meat for winter supplies. They then left the post for winter hunting grounds, returning again in the spring.

In many respects, the experience of the Dene during the Middle Postcontact Period parallelled that of the Western Cree and Assiniboine to the south: the establishment of interior posts broke their monopoly as middlemen. Another catastrophe struck. A smallpox epidemic in 1781-82 claimed an estimated 90 percent of the Caribou Eater population living near Fort Churchill.

Inuit Trading and Employment

To pursue the Inuit trade during the 18th century, the HBC annually sent sloops north from Fort Churchill as far as Marble Island. During this period, Caribou Inuit, middlemen in trade, passed European goods on to the Iglulik, Netsilik, and Copper Inuit located to the north and northwest. From 1790, however, the HBC's summer trading voyages to the Caribou Inuit were discontinued, and instead the company encouraged them to trade directly into Churchill. Small parties of men travelled in early spring by kayak or sled, bringing white foxes to trade. Despite the Inuit trade being unprofitable, they made a major contribution to the post by hunting seals and whales. Although their skills were much in demand, the Inuit usually did not stay as long as needed for whaling. Instead, they returned north before late summer to hunt caribou.

By 1820, approximately 40 Inuit regularly traded at Fort Churchill. By this time, the company also employed them as temporary labourers and as servants at the post. This unique experience qualified two of them to be hired on the first two Franklin expeditions as interpreters. Indeed, training of Inuit interpreters continued to be a function of Fort Churchill during the years of northern expeditions.

The Metis

The establishment of trading posts, which brought the English to Hudson Bay and subsequently the French to southern and western Manitoba, resulted in mixed-blood populations. The acceleration of the fur trade after 1763 drew increasing numbers of Europeans into the interior of the continent, and the mixed-blood population increased. As early as 1775, the prairie Metis became a distinct people with French and Native roots, while an English/Scottish-Native mixed-blood group formed in the vicinity of Hudson Bay. After the establishment of Selkirk's colony at Red River in 1812, some of these people moved south to the settlement.

Economic Pursuits

During the Middle Postcontact Period, three distinguishable lifeways developed among the mixed-blood population.

- Permanent employees of the companies, allied closely with the fur trade, served as clerks, canoemen, packers, and interpreters with homes and families located close to the posts.
- People described as semi-sedentary, centered in part around small farms made up of sizable gardens, grain plots, and livestock. Each summer, the owners vacated the farms and went to the plains in search of bison herds. At other times of the year, they used Red River carts to undertake commercial freighting.
- The third group trapped furbearers in the winter and hunted bison in the summer, similar to other Native people in the area.

Late Postcontact Period (1821 – 1900)

Indian Farming

The phase of history called the Late Postcontact Period commences with the amalgamation of North West and Hudson's Bay companies in 1821 and ends with the turn of the 20th century. During this time, the missionizing initiatives of the Roman Catholic and Anglican churches that took place in southern Manitoba, particularly in the Red River district, had a considerable influence on the Native population. For example, in 1832, the Reverend William Cochran began an experimental farm among the Ojibwe of the lower Red River Valley. He gathered as many of the Native people as possible into one settlement.

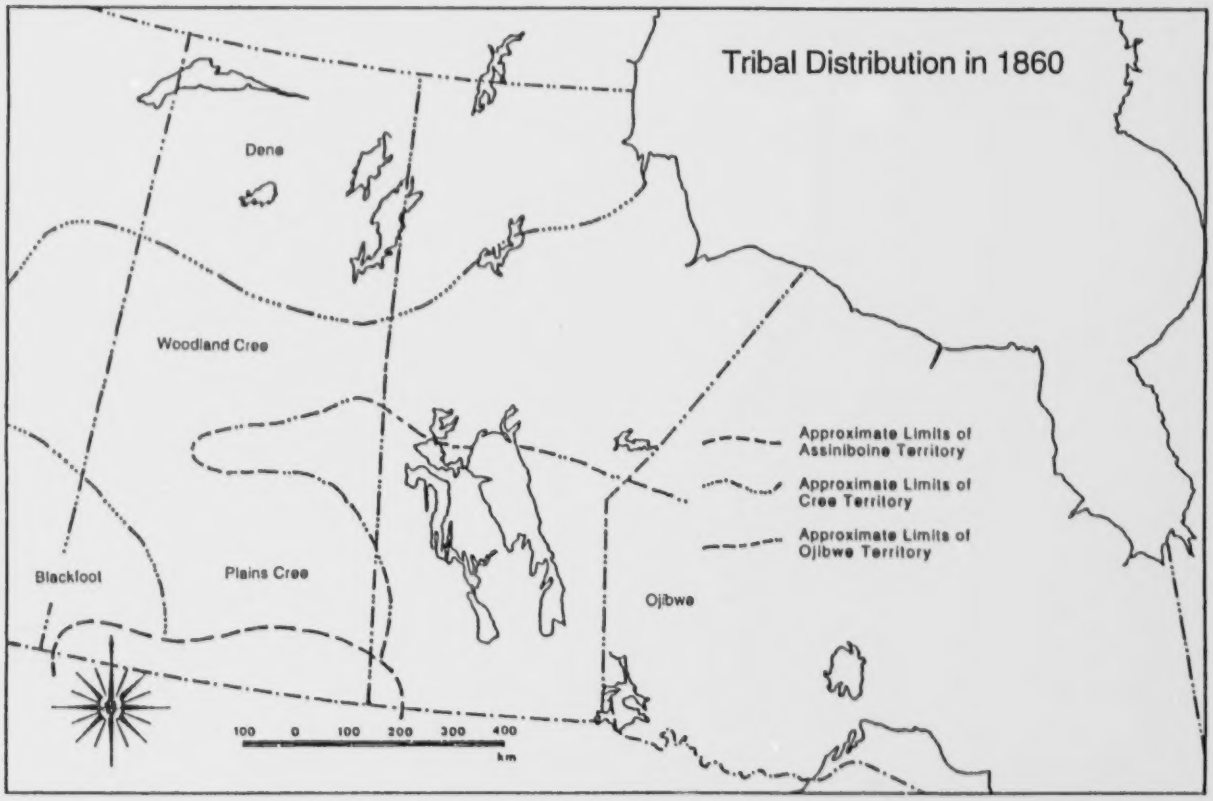
To convert them to Christianity, Reverend Cochran believed that he had to congregate them in a permanent agricultural settlement. The Ojibwe, reluctant to forsake their traditional lifeway, a seasonal round of activities involving large summer fishing camps and family-oriented hunting and trapping in the winter, stayed around the south basin of Lake Winnipeg. Poor results from traditional occupations in 1831 and 1832 caused some Native people to accept Cochran's proposal to settle at Netley Creek. The settlement, relocated upstream near the mouth of Cook's Creek in 1833, prospered between 1840 and 1860.

Population pressures by non-Natives, however, led to the break up of the farming settlement. Some of the Native people sold land to incoming homesteaders from other parts of the Red River Colony. The death in 1864 of Chief Peguis, whose leadership had kept the Cree-Ojibwe alliance in harmony, placed further stress on the settlement.

As a result, friction between the two groups increased and alienated the former allies. Enthusiasm of the Native farmers began to diminish in the 1860s when drought and grasshopper infestations caused a number of partial and total crop failures throughout the Red River area. This chain of disasters demoralized Native farmers who felt betrayed for having abandoned their traditional economy for one that did not live up to the promises of the missionaries. Accordingly, many of them left the Cook's Creek area to return to their traditional lifeways.

Treaties

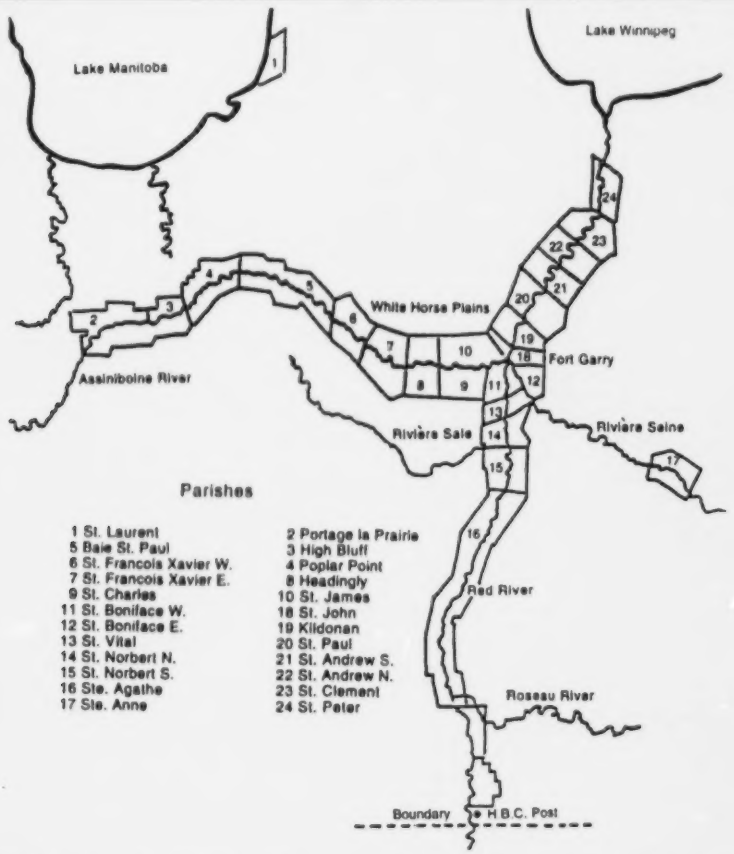
Between 1871 and 1874 another major development of the Late Postcontact Period took place in southern Manitoba: the signing of treaties 1 through 4. By signing the treaties, the Native people relinquished claims to the land in exchange for, among other things, reserves of land and annual money payments. The closing decades of the 19th century also witnessed the Red River Resistance, the consequential out-migration of many Metis people, and the establishment of church-run residential schools as part of the federal government's policy to eliminate traditional Native culture and values and replace them with those of Euro-Canadian society.



In 1860, the Ojibwe continue to dominate the southern region, while the Assiniboine nation is confined to small corner of southwest Manitoba.

Source: Ray, A. *Indians in the Fur Trade: Their Role as Hunters, Trappers and Middlemen in the Lands Southwest of Hudson Bay 1660-1870.* University of Toronto Press, 1974.

Population shifts, occurring throughout the history of southern Manitoba, continued during the Late Postcontact Period. By the mid-1800s, significant numbers of Assiniboine and Plains Cree occupied the extreme southwestern margins of the province. The map above indicates the extent of their territory. People, who identified themselves as Ojibwe, French-speaking Metis and English-speaking mixed-bloods, made their homes in almost all the southern half of Manitoba. In the early 1860s whole communities of Dakota, fleeing from the Minnesota Uprising of 1862, also took up permanent residence in this province.



In 1870, extensive Metis settlements span the major river systems of southern Manitoba.

Source: Sealey D. B. and A. S. Lussier. *The Metis: Canada's Forgotten People.* Manitoba Metis Federation Press. Winnipeg. 1975.

Buffalo Hunt

The closing of redundant and unprofitable trading posts after 1821 led to lay-offs of numerous employees, mainly French- and Michif-speaking Metis, many of whom relocated to the Red River Valley. The expanding population of the district, coupled with the ongoing provisioning needs of HBC posts, stimulated the development of the annual summer buffalo hunt by the Metis. By the 1860s, Metis had wrested control of the hunt, first from the Dakota, and subsequently from the Plains Cree.

The hunt, an enormous logistical undertaking in its heyday, involved 1,240 Red River carts and 1,630 people in 1840. It ran from early June to mid-August, including the time it took to get to and from

the hunting grounds. The Metis harvested more than a million pounds or 453,600 kilograms of meat and hides from the plains. For a venture of this magnitude, the men implemented and enforced carefully planned rules of conduct. With almost military precision, the hunt's organization and discipline reflected the Metis' aggressive approach in dealings with competing Indian nations and with the Canadians during the Red River disturbances of 1869-70.

Changing Cree Society

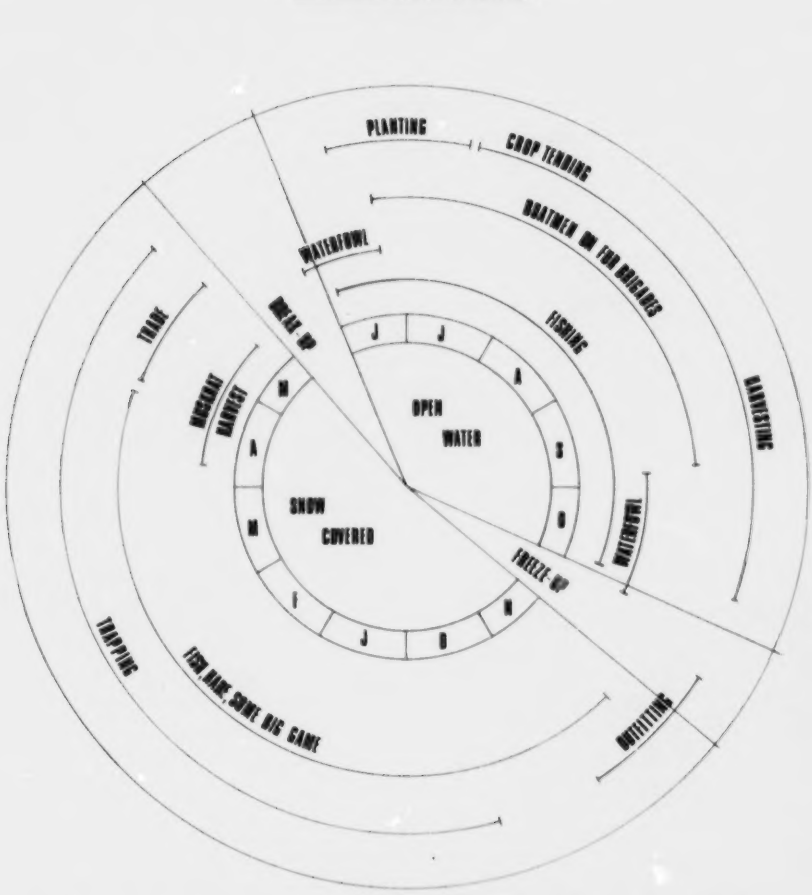
Before the 1821 amalgamation of the Hudson's Bay and North West Companies, the Cree people of Manitoba's boreal forest followed a semi-nomadic way of life. The most conspicuous changes occurred in the adoption of European technology and in increased emphasis on the hunting of small, non-migratory furbearing animals.

After the redundant fur-trade posts closed down, following the merger of the two companies, the bands tended to localize and align themselves with particular posts – the forerunner of the even more sedentary reserve system that developed later in the century. The serious depletion of furbearers, resulting from the earlier competition between the companies, necessitated conservation measures.

As a result, a family-hunting territory system evolved, whereby a particular group, whose members were related to one another by blood or marriage, had the right to trap, hunt or fish in their own inherited area bounded by certain lakes, rivers or other natural features.

Native people living in the central forest region of Manitoba came under the influence of Christian missionaries. These missionaries converted some Native people to teach Christianity to the local population. Missionary activity began in earnest in the mid-1800s, particularly by clergy of the Roman Catholic and Anglican churches, see illustration on page 26.

Despite the efforts of the churches, traditional beliefs and spirituality continued to survive, especially in remote areas. One significant result of missionary activities was the development at Norway House of Cree syllabics to facilitate the spread of the gospels among the Native population.



During the Late Postcontact period Christian missionaries introduce and encourage planting, crop-tending, and harvesting to the annual economic cycle of the Cree people living in The Pas boreal forest area.

Source: Pettipas, K. "An Ethnohistory of The Pas Area, Prehistoric-1875: A Study in Cree Adaptation." In *Directions in Manitoba Prehistory: Papers in Honour of Chris Vickers*. Manitoba Archaeology Society and Association of Manitoba Archaeologists, 1980.

Treaty boundaries, dates and periods of signing span from 1871 to 1910.

Source: Treaty and Aboriginal Rights Research Centre, Winnipeg.

Inuit at Fort Churchill

Treaty 5 brought the cessation of much of central Manitoba to the Crown in 1875-76, while the remainder of the province was ceded to Canada in adhesions to treaties 5 and 9 in 1908-10 and 1929, respectively, see map below, left.

Isolation enabled the Caribou Eater Dene of northernmost Manitoba to remain relatively unaffected by the changes in the south. Perhaps the greatest external influences came from the Oblate missionaries in the 1840s.

Throughout the 1830s, the Inuit trade expanded. In 1838, over 660 Inuit traded at Churchill, compared to only 330 Dene and Cree. The period between 1840-60 saw the Inuit extend hunting territory inland into the barren-grounds, the traditional summer hunting range of the Dene, and the beginning of Inuit caribou meat provisioning to the post.

Fort Churchill in the mid-19th century experienced an increased dependence on Inuit provisioning, offsetting a simultaneous decline in the Dene food supply to the post.

By the late 1800s, however, a dramatic decrease of Inuit involvement with Fort Churchill occurred as a result of

- trade competition from American whalers in northern Hudson Bay
- population losses from epidemics
- alternate inland trading posts

Visitation to the Fort became sporadic, numbers dwindled. By 1909 only three Inuit families arrived for the summer. The opening of the Chesterfield Inlet post in 1911 attracted many of the remaining Inuit, who now only occasionally traded at Churchill.

Those few who maintained ties to Fort Churchill saw the post's functions change during the 1920s when it became a grain exporting port. The Inuit found their skills no longer needed, so they discontinued coming to the post.

Dene Way of Life Alters

While the first century of trade with the HBC at Churchill saw the Dene way of life altered, the Dene maintained a high degree of independence from European goods because they could still hunt the plentiful caribou to the northwest.

Throughout the 1800s, the number of Dene trading at Churchill continually declined because of the opening of alternative inland posts and population loss due to smallpox. By the late 1800s many of the Faraway Dene had stopped coming in to Fort Churchill. The Home Guard Dene began to spend more time around the post, passing summers working as labourers at Fort Churchill and losing much of their independence from the post, which they had gained in the summer caribou hunt. By the 1890s, the Dene use of the traditional barren grounds for caribou hunting essentially ceased. The Inuit, who had expanded into the barren grounds, assumed their role as provisioners of caribou meat to the post.

STORIES

AN ORAL TRADITION PROVIDES TALES OF WONDER

Definitions

Introduction

Human beings have lived on the earth for two million years. Before the first writing was developed in the Middle East about 5000 years ago, all knowledge, technology, wisdom, philosophy, and history passed from generation to generation through word of mouth. Throughout most of the vast span of human existence, people have communicated history and lore and educated the young by means of the spoken, rather than the written, word.

The subject matter of the **Stories** poster and these notes falls under the general term "folklore" – the sum total of a society's traditions, beliefs, customs, sayings, stories, myths, legends, tales, proverbs, riddles, and verse – that are or can be expressed by word of mouth. Not all societies possess all these elements but those elements that are present within any particular culture collectively make up its folklore, or its oral literature.

The phenomena that concern us directly here are myths and legends. In the language of modern Native Manitobans, myths and legends are together referred to as teachings.

The Power of Myths

Myths, by anthropological definition, are sacred stories relating to the past. Together, myths make up a historical record that documents miraculous events and proper moral conduct. The setting is typically a world different from that of the present, and the principal actors are spiritual or supernatural beings. The purpose of mythic stories is to explain how things came to be, and to teach people what must be done so as to avoid chaos.

> *Myths relate how one state of affairs became another: how an unpeopled world became populated; how chaos became cosmos; how mortals became mortal; how the seasons came to replace a climate without seasons; how the original unity of mankind became men and women. (**International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences**, 1978.)*

A society's mythology or mythic system provides it with two basic things: a cosmogeny, an account of origins, and a cosmology, which is a total explanation of the universe. Furthermore, myths validate the blueprint, or charter, for the institutions and values of a nation, and serve as educational devices for transferring the necessary information.

It is unfortunate that the word "myth" has taken on, in everyday use, a negative connotation. Usually, when people use the word, they imply that the story in question is made up – a figment of someone's imagination and not true to fact. This is certainly not the anthropological understanding of the term. It is disrespectful to judge the validity of another society's beliefs as expressed in its mythology.

Mystical Legends

Legends are generally distinguished from myths by anthropologists and quite often by the people themselves. Whereas myths are usually cast in an extraordinary world of long ago in which the principal "actors" are spiritual or supernatural beings, legends relate happenings in the world as it is known today, though set in a somewhat earlier time. Human beings are the central characters, and supernaturals may also be involved.

Legends are based on the familiar world of everyday experience. Nonetheless, though more mundane in their content and subject matter, legends can contain their share of the mystical, awesome and wonderful, and there are times when the dividing line between myth and legend is unclear.

Cree people, who live east of James Bay, for example, distinguish between earlier and later stories. There was a time long ago when people could talk to animals and other things in nature. Something has happened since then, and people are no longer able to communicate on that level. It is believed that the stories relating to the time when these things happened are the oldest. Stories of more recent origin are those that were developed after the people lost this ability to converse with other-than-human beings.

Similarly, a distinction can be made between stories told by the Rock Cree of northern Manitoba. There, a distinction is made between ***acadohkiwina*** and ***acimowina***. ***Acadohkiwina*** are those that outsiders would categorize as myth: their subject matter includes animals that possess human or human-like characteristics; powerful heroes; and marriages between humans and animals or other non-human creatures.

Actual human beings lived in those ancient times, but they were few and far between. As was the case with the James Bay Cree, those of northern Manitoba equate these phenomena with ancient times and a world different from the one we know today. The famous Wesakechak stories, an example of which is recounted below and illustrated in the poster, are in this class. Modern story-tellers have no first-hand acquaintance or familiarity with the characters in these stories, outside of what contact has been made with them in dreams and through ritual performances. These stories are believed to be true accounts of things that actually happened when the world was different from what it is today.

The ***acimowina*** of the Rock Cree deal with a more recent time period that is continuous with and connected to the culture and society of the narrator. The story-teller either knows (or knew) the principal characters in the stories, or has indirect familiarity with them via other persons (intermediaries). Examples would include tales of renowned forebears, jokes and funny stories, recollections of dealings with non-Natives, gossip, serious accounts of life and experiences in the bush. They may involve spiritual beings; and some of them are simply fabrications intended solely to amuse the listeners.

The Lake Winnipeg Ojibwe also distinguish between mythic stories (***atisokanak***) and news or tidings (***tabatcamowin***). The characters in the ***atisokanak*** are looked upon as still-living beings who have been in existence since time beyond memory. In their form, name and behaviour, these entities resemble humans and animals, and continue to interact with true human beings.

The ***atisokanak*** cover a rather broad spectrum of subject matter, ranging from familiar, everyday happenings, to remarkable experiences, to events that verge on the spectacular. One Ojibwe historian, George Copway, writing in the mid-1800s, did not distinguish the stories of his people as either myths or legends, but rather classified them either as "amusing," or "historical," or "moral."

Functions of Folklore

The oral literature of the Aboriginal peoples possesses a wide range of functions. Collectively, its role is to

- entertain or amuse
- educate the young in the history, morals, and philosophy of their people
- keep up the people's morale during the psychologically depressing ordeal of the harsh winter months
- validate and uphold the principles that form the foundations of the people's way of life

The teachings' effect has been compared to a sort of "code" for thinking, notions of behaviour, cosmogeny, and cosmology. The "decipherment" of this code does not take place all at once, during the first hearing. Rather, the message becomes clearer and more fully understood the more the story is heard.

Four Seasons

With very rare exceptions, the telling of stories traditionally took place only during the winter months. There were two reasons for this – one practical, the other philosophical. The practical reason derived from the fact that the summertime was spent in considerable economic activity. The nights were short, the days were long, and the people's time was best spent in food-getting pursuits. The philosophical rationale lent support to this practical consideration: since spirits figured in the stories, and since the spirits did not like to hear themselves being talked about, it was advisable to narrate the stories in the winter when the spirits were far away or in a torpid state.

In other words, telling stories in the warm-weather months was taboo, and anyone breaking the taboo ran the risk of having his/her body entered, and his/her life threatened, by toads, lizards, or snakes. Exceptions to this rule were provided for when a group of men were about to embark on a war expedition and a story-teller was called upon to relate accounts of past successes, or during Sun Dances when elders narrated important traditions of the people.

Narrative Media

Today, in Canadian society, there exists a whole range of media for conveying information: television, books, radio, and movies. In

traditional Native society, information was communicated by a variety of means: rock and hide paintings, birch bark scrolls, signs left on trails and, of course, story-telling. The last-mentioned involved not only the human voice but also hand movements and facial expressions. The appropriate effects are well described in the following quotation from an account of the northern Cree written between 1862 and 1865.

> *The appropriate gestures and expressive pantomime with which an Indian illustrates his speech render it easy to understand.... The scene described was partly acted; the motions of the game, the ... approach of the hunter, the taking aim, the shot, the cry of the animal, or the voice of its dashing away, and the pursuit, were all given as the tale went on. (**Indian Legends of Canada**, 1960.)*

In other words, story-telling lent itself to dramatic effect that was different from the dynamics of ordinary everyday conversation and instruction.

The following Ojibwe, Cree, Dakota, and Dene stories illustrate the various observations provided above. Some analytical comments precede or follow each story.

Creation (Cree)

The following provides an indigenous Cree version of the first peopling of the continent, known aboriginally as Turtle Island. This story from *Sacred Legends of the Sandy Lake Cree* is a good example of what the Rock Cree would categorize as ***acadohkiwina***. It contrasts with academic accounts which suggest that the first people to inhabit North America entered the continent by way of the Bering Strait land bridge many thousands of years ago. In due course, their descendants came to occupy most of the western hemisphere, including Manitoba.

The Cree version of creation follows.

When the first light came, O-ma-ma-ma, the earth mother of Crees, gave birth to the spirits of the world. O-ma-ma-ma is a beautiful Indian woman who has always remained pretty although she is older than time itself. She has long black hair and she always smiles on her children, the spirits of the world.

Her first-born was powerful Binay-sih, the thunderbird who would protect the other animals of the world from the mysterious and destructive sea serpent, Genay-big. The thunderbirds live in nests high in the mountains toward the setting sun. Clouds become black and roll across the sky when the thunderbirds are angry or are fighting with Genay-big. Often it rains and fire flashes through the air while the voices of the thunderbirds cry out in anger. We humans are worms compared to the thunderbirds.

The second creature from the womb of O-ma-ma-ma was Oma-ka-ki, the lowly frog who was given sorcerers' powers and would help control the insects of the world. Oma-ka-ki is often called upon by the other animals to help them when they are in trouble.

Third-born was the supernatural Indian, Wee-sa-kay-jac. O-ma-ma-ma gave Wee-sa-kay-jac many powers. He can change himself into any shape or form to protect himself from danger. Eventually he created the Indian people.

But he is also an adventurer who likes to create mischief and play tricks on us. Sometimes he gets our people very angry; however, Wee-sa-kay-jac is to be respected by our people because he has great powers. If you ever meet him offer him some of your tobacco and he may help you.

Storytellers explain the mysteries and origins of the universe with stories about people, animals, and birds, fire and floods.

O-ma-ma-ma's fourth child was Ma-heegun, the wolf. Because Ma-heegun is the little brother of Wee-sa-kay-jac, they often travel together in the forest. Wee-sa-kay-jac will turn himself into a little person and will ride on the hairy back of his four-legged brother. They have many adventures together.

After Ma-heegun came Amik, the beaver. Amik should also be respected by our people. It is even said that the beavers were once humans in a different world, but evil befell them and they became animals. Whenever you kill a beaver, you must throw bones back into the pond as an offering to the spirit of the beaver.

Then, fish, rock, grass and trees on the earth, and most of the other animals eventually came from the womb of O-ma-ma-ma. It was for a long time that only animals and spirits inhabited the world because Wee-sa-kay-jac had not made any Indians.

The Chibimoodaywin, or Migration (Ojibwe)

The following account is from the book *The History of the Ojibway Nation*. It is an example of what the Ojibwe writer George Copway would classify as "historical." It is the kind of story that the Lake Winnipeg Saulteaux categorize as ***tabatcamowin***. It is worth pointing out that the usual academic reconstructions of Native Canadian history do not cite this narrative. This is because archaeological digs and archival research do not contain the kind of information that is available solely through oral literature. This is a good example of why the effort to present a complete Aboriginal history should not rely solely on archaeological and historiographic research.

Our forefathers, many string of lives ago, lived on the shores of the Great Salt Water in the east. Here it was, that while congregated in a great town, and while they were suffering the ravages of sickness and death, the Great Spirit, at the intercession of Man-ab-o-sho, the great common uncle of the An-ish-in-aub-ag (Ojibwe), granted them this rite (the Midewiwin) wherewith life is restored and prolonged.

Our forefathers moved from the shores of the great water, and proceeded westward. The Me-da-we lodge was pulled down and it was not again erected, till our forefathers again took a stand on the shores of the great river near where Mo-ne-aung (Montreal) now stands.

Again these rites were forgotten, and the Me-da-we lodge was not built till the Ojibways found themselves congregated at Bow-e-ting (outlet of Lake Superior), where it remained for many winters. Still the Ojibways moved westward, and for the last time the Me-da-we lodge was erected on the Island of La Pointe, and here, long before the pale face appeared among them, it was practised in its purest and most original form. Many of our fathers lived the full term of life granted to mankind by the Great Spirit, and the forms of many old people were mingled with each rising generation.

The Woman Who Changed into a Deer (Dakota)

This Dakota story is taken from the book entitled *The Soul of the Indian: An Interpretation*. The story's intention is to teach children proper behaviour.

A pretty Dakota girl wanted to get water from a certain slough near her parents' home, but they would not let her go. Neither would they let her go to gather firewood. One day she disappeared from camp. The chief sent out scouts to find her but after four days of

The story of the woman who became a deer encourages children to listen to their parents.

search they gave up. One day thereafter her mother heard a voice outside the lodge. It cried, ***Ina, ina, ina*** ('Mother, mother, mother!'). Her mother went out and there was her face. A stag was with her.

The daughter said, "This stag found me when I was lost. Now I am married to him and am one of the deer people. I will come and visit you from time to time." After four or five days she came to visit again, but then she went off permanently with the deer people.

The moral of the story is that children should listen to their parents.

The First Battle (Dakota)

A very familiar relic of early times is the ubiquitous arrowhead, made of sharp, flint-like stone. Archaeologists are of the opinion that these objects were fashioned by many generations of Native hunters so as to render more effective their spears and arrows. The traditional Dakota explanation, however, paints a very different picture, as related in this mythic account by Charles Eastman, a Dakota writer, in his book, *The Soul of he Indian: An Interpretation.*

Once more our first ancestor (Ish-na-e-cha-ge) roamed happily among the animal people, who were in those days a powerful nation. He learned their ways and their language – for they had a common tongue in those days; learned to sing like the birds, to swim like the fishes, and to climb sure-footed over rocks like the mountain sheep.

Notwithstanding that he was their good comrade and did them no harm, Unk-to-mee (spider, the original trouble-maker) once more sowed dissension among the animals, and messages were sent into all quarters of the earth, sea, and air, that all the tribes might unite to declare war upon the solitary man who was destined to become their master.

After a time the young man discovered the plot, and came home very sorrowful. He loved his animal friends, and was grieved that they should combine against him. Besides, he was naked and unarmed. But his Elder Brother armed him with a bow and flint-headed arrows, a stone war-club and a spear. He likewise tossed a pebble four times into the air, and each time it became a cliff or wall of rock about the teepee.

Night and day the Little Boy Man remained upon the watch for his enemies from the top of the wall, and at last he beheld the prairies black with buffalo herds, and the elk gathering upon the edges of the forest. Bears and wolves were closing in from all directions, and now from the sky the Thunder gave his fearful war-whoops, answered by the wolf's howl.

The badgers and other burrowers began at once to undermine his rocky fortress, while the climbers undertook to scale its perpendicular walls.

Then for the first time on earth the bow was strung, and hundreds of flint-headed arrows found their mark in the bodies of the animals, while each time that the Boy Man swung his stone war-club, his enemies fell in countless numbers.

Finally the insects, the little people of the air, attacked him in a body, filling his eyes and ears, and tormenting him with their poisoned spears, so that he was in despair. He called for help upon his Elder Brother, who ordered him to strike the rocks with his stone war-club. As soon as he had done so, sparks of fire flew upon the dry grass of the prairie and it burst into flame. A mighty smoke ascended, which drove away the teasing swarms of the insect people, while the flames terrified and scattered the others.

This was the first dividing of the trail between man and the animal people, and when the animals had sued for peace, the treaty provided that they must ever after furnish man with flesh for his food and skins for clothing, though not without effort and danger on his part. The little insects refused to make any concession, and have ever since been the tormentors of man; however, the birds of the air declared that they would punish them for their obstinacy, and this they continue to do unto this day.

As pointed out by Eastman, "Our people have always claimed that the stone arrows which are found so generally throughout the country are the ones that the first man used in his battle with the animals. It is not recorded in our traditions, much less is it within the memory of our old men, that we have ever made or used similar arrowheads."

The Little People (Plains Cree)

The Plains Cree, like the Dakota, have their own explanation for the existence of arrowheads, other than the one provided by archaeologists. The following is taken from a story that appears in Edward Ahenakew's *Voices of the Plains Cree*.

> *It seems that these Ma-ma-kwa-se-suk live beneath the ground in the sand hills or on river banks. They are very small, no taller than a two-year-old child.... The women noticed how nervous the little things were, and so they moved a short distance away, and when they looked again the creatures had vanished. There were tracks, but they led nowhere; then on the side of a little hill, where the sand was disturbed, the women found a flint arrowhead. They had been told of the sounds that came from underground where the little people worked to shape these flints; they did not want to look further, or trouble the little ones.*

It should be noted that the Dakota account of the First Battle is an example of a myth, as defined above, whereas the Plains Cree story is a legend, inasmuch as it involves Native women in an otherwise everyday setting.

The Sun Taken in a Snare (Dene)

This example is extracted from the *Western Canadian Journal of Antropology* (1970). It is an explanatory and mythic story; it provides a reason for a natural phenomenon such as the length of daytime.

A long, long time ago, a brother and sister lived all alone. They made their living just as we do now, that is, by hunting and fishing.

Every day the sister tended her snares in the trees to capture pheasants, snow ptarmigans, white rabbits and even lynx.

But she as well as her brother noticed with terror that the days and nights followed each other at shorter and shorter intervals; that the days were getting ever shorter; that the sun (Sa) hardly showed itself and soon hid itself beneath the earth's disc in the south-southwest where the "mouth-of-the-earth" is (nni-odhae).

Then they understood fearfully that the earth was going to freeze, and that all life on its surface would be extinguished. Then both of them resolved to set it right. One day the sister, tending her lynx snares as usual in the spruce forest, noticed in one of the snares the round purplish face of the sun which had been caught there and was being strangled.

She warned her brother; they hurried to catch the sun and strangle it completely. But he pleaded for his life: "If you let me live," he said to them, "henceforth I will prolong my course. I will make the days get longer and I will diffuse life again with warmth on the earth."

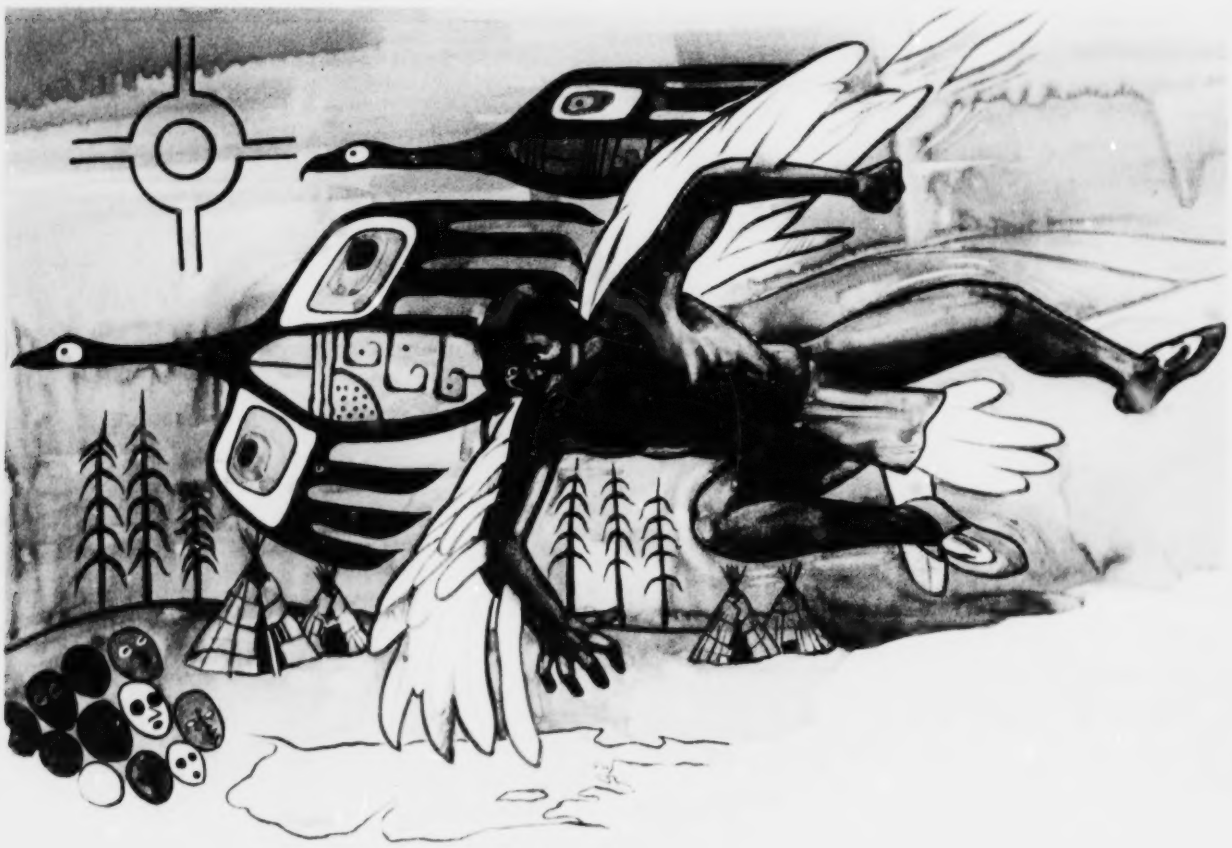
On this condition, they let the sun go and from that time on, they say, you can see the sun shine so long in the vault of the heavens.

Nanabush Flies With the Geese (Ojibwe)

The final story is taken from Basil Johnston's book *By Canoe and Moccasin*. This myth explains how Lake Winnipeg came to be murky.

Nanabush spent some months at Ponemah, (***Boonimau***,)... in the district of Red Lake, (***Miskwagamiwi-sagaigun***, or "red watered lake,"). Only by stealing away one night did Nanabush manage to leave for Net Lake (***Suppeewigo sagaigun***). Nanabush at last came to a land that was very different from what he had been accustomed to. Its people had not yet given it a name. The land was one mighty prairie, ***mishkodae***, "without hills or forest," inhabited by animals and birds he had never seen. For all its endlessness and changelessness, the plain was bountiful and its animals, rich in fat and flesh, were beyond counting.

The people were harvesting wild rice for the coming winter when large flocks of geese descended upon this unnamed lake to feed and rest for awhile before resuming their migration. Learning that they were bound for the land of perpetual summer to escape the winter, Nanabush received permission to accompany the geese. In order to fly, the chief of all the geese gave Nanabush a pair of wings, a rudder and then feathered him. The main rule in flight is not to look down, warned the chief goose before take-off.



Nanabush flies with the geese before falling into the waters of a lake. This story explains why Lake Winnipeg is so murky.

When the flock lifted into the sky, likewise did Nana-bush, as if he had been so doing all his life.

There was gloom in the Anishinaubae lodges and villages the entire winter. The people longed for the return of Nanabush.

Never had they looked for the coming of spring more anxiously than they now did. Long before the geese were due to arrive, crowds of Anishinaubaeg gathered on the shores of the lake to welcome Nanabush and celebrate his return with a festival.

Nanabush was in the first flock that appeared in the southern sky and the people, recognizing him, sent up a mighty cheer of welcome.

When he heard the acclaim, Nanabush was moved by the affection of his brothers and sisters and he looked down.

At that moment he fell to the earth, legs and arms flailing, feathers fluttering in the air as they were stripped from his wings and rudder. Nanabush plunged into the shallow waters of the lake and was imbedded in the mud. After rescuing Nanabush, the Anishinaubaeg cleansed him of the muck, but in washing Nanabush, the waters of the lake were forever begrimed. From that day on the Anishinaubaeg called it ***Weenipeegosheeng***, "the murky watered lake," or Winnipeg.

MADE BY HAND

AN ARTISTIC HERITAGE AND A CONTINUING TRADITION

Concepts and Definitions

Moccasins from different nations reflect diverse decorative designs.

Every human society possesses a material culture, that is, the total amount of objects, or artifacts, made or used by a people. Artifacts have four key elements: technology, raw material, energy, and skill. A person who manufactures artifacts is a craftsperson. A technique is a certain way a craftsperson combines energy, skill, technology, and raw material to produce an artifact or portion of an artifact. Sometimes, several different techniques are used to produce a finished artifact.

The raw materials used most by Native Manitobans prior to European contact were stone, minerals, bone, horn, antler, sinew, wood, including bark and roots, leather and vegetable fibre. They made some artifacts entirely from a single material, while others involved the combination of several different substances. An example is the flesher, which comprises a bone handle, a metal bit and sinew bindings that hold the bit in place. Traditionally, Native craftspeople used all natural, as opposed to synthetic, raw materials and they produced hand-made goods rather than those mass-produced via an assembly line.

All artifacts have form and function. The form embodies not only basic shape, but often style as well. Style is, by definition, a distinctive or characteristic way of doing something. Very often, each community developed its own style, and distinct identity. On the other hand, certain shapes and styles may become widely distributed among different and sometimes distant communities. This is done by

- **diffusion** - the spread of certain artifact shapes, styles, and technology throughout adjoining populations, without any actual movement of people
- **migration** – when groups of people migrate, they move considerable distances and take their material culture and associated styles with them

There are many traditional artifact types found throughout Manitoba and adjacent regions that reflect past diffusion or migration, or both. The widespread distribution of these artifact shapes and styles indicates the existence of ancient and far-flung communication networks and alliances among precontact Native peoples.

The function of an artifact may be varied. For example, apart from the basic purpose of a particular piece of clothing to protect the body from cold and moisture, it may also, by its shape or decoration, be made to

- reflect the wearer's social status
- improve appearance
- express the society's standards of modesty

Many artifacts are produced with the idea of achieving a particular task, and nothing more. They are strictly utilitarian in function, and the effort that goes into their manufacture is the bare minimum needed to produce a tool to assist in completing a certain task. Frequently, however, the craftsperson goes one step further and decorates some portion or all of the object to make the work more enjoyable or the object appear more pleasing. In taking that extra step, the craftsperson not only displays skill, but also performs the role of the artist.

In its basic definition, art is simply an aesthetically pleasing and meaningful arrangement of elements. A more anthropological definition reads: Any embellishment of ordinary living that is achieved with competence and has describable form. To put it another way, art is "any manifestation of the impulse to make more beautiful and thus to heighten pleasure of any phase of living that is so recognized by a people."

Native arts are the so-called plastic and graphic arts. The graphic arts are painting, drawing, and engraving, while the plastic arts, carving and modelling in high and low relief and in the round, produce three-dimensional forms.

Motifs and Designs

Art is expressed in the form of motifs and design. A motif is a distinct element of design, and it can be simple or elaborate, see illustration on page 49. The motif is the smallest attribute of a larger image, and a combination of similar, or similar and different, motifs constitutes a design. A design is the arrangement and co-ordination of parts or details, i.e., motifs, to achieve an overall effect or impression.

A motif is a distinct element or design; it can be simple or elaborate.

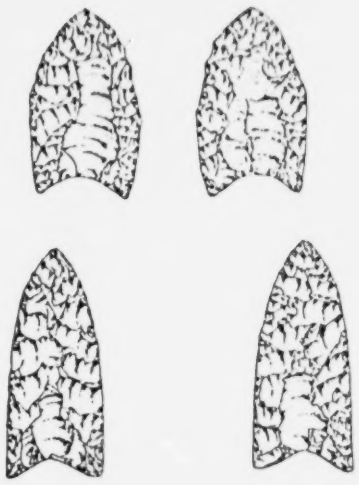
In traditional, non-Western societies there is basically one kind of art, and that is decorative art – the kind of art that makes an artifact more attractive by adding embellishments that may not be functional. Other products that Europeans or Euro-Canadians would classify as art would not be so considered by members of non-Western societies – the people who actually made the products. In fact, non-Western societies often lack a word for the concept of art.

The definition of art specifies that the purpose of doing art is to make something more beautiful and to heighten pleasure. This definition includes certain objects produced using artistic techniques such as painting, drawing, and engraving. Some are still not art, however, because their purpose or function is to do something other than simply please or beautify. Rather, such expressions are symbols: visual figures or characters that represent something else, and whose purpose is oriented toward some objective other than simply creating aesthetic pleasure. On the other hand, a symbol, like any other artifact, can be embellished with artistic motifs or elaborations. The information that is to be conveyed by the symbol is emphasized and strengthened by the modifying influence of the artistic embellishment.

Techniques of Stone

Having reviewed the basics of material culture, skills, and art, it is useful to examine some actual examples from Manitoba history. The oldest artifacts found in Manitoba, dating back some 11,500 years to Early Precontact times, are stone spear points. Of all the various categories of artifacts produced by the earliest peoples, only the stone tools have survived the forces of decomposition in Manitoba's soils.

Early Precontact Stone



Eleven-thousand-year old stone spear points from southwestern Manitoba have channels or "flutes" created to thin the objects to make them easier to shaft. These artifacts are the earliest known expressions of material culture from Manitoba. They are found in the sandy areas of the Assiniboine delta. People made and used them when glacial Lake Agassiz covered most of the area.

Because stone tools are the most conspicuous artifacts at Early Precontact sites, and since stone tools often created implements of other materials such as wood, bone, and leather, they can be considered the most essential of the early people's technological repertoire. Stone tool technology was part of the lives of Native Manitobans throughout the 11,500-year-long Precontact Era; it constitutes a tradition in the truest sense.

For convenience, this section separates raw material into two categories based on source: local and exotic. People gathered local stone without having to travel any great distance. In Manitoba, glaciers distributed a great deal of useable stone, known as chert, over large areas of the province. Chert is found in particularly large concentrations in portions of the old Lake Agassiz beach ridges and in glacial deposits along the Manitoba Escarpment. The distinctive Knife River flint – an exotic and very superior stone used in tool-making – occurs in abundance in western North Dakota.

Ancient spear points, illustrated at left, and tools made from Knife River flint have been found as far north as Swan River. Although it is unclear how this widespread distribution came about, it may have been the result of trade between adjoining groups. Due to the Knife River flint being a comparatively unusual commodity in most of Manitoba, people used every bit of such an exotic material. Archaeologists, therefore, have been unable to find chipping stations or workshops with large amounts of waste material. The Knife River flint's superior quality, compared to local flint, has led some archaeologists to believe people used the coarser local cherts only if Knife River flint was unavailable.

Tool-Making

Direct percussion, above, uses a hand-held cobble as a hammerstone, as well as a cobble hammerstone and a stone anvil, below.

Two methods of indirect percussion: two-handed method involved one person while the three-handed method requires two persons.

In manufacturing stone tools, the early craftspeople employed a number of techniques. They produced by far the bulk of the stone tool inventory by stone flaking or chipping, as opposed to grinding or polishing. They practiced two basic kinds of stone chipping – percussion and pressure.

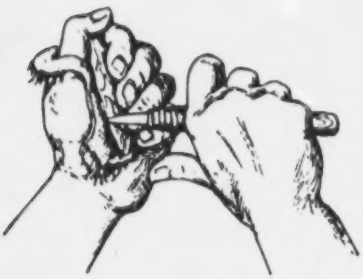
Percussion involved striking a piece of stone with a hammer, see left. Sometimes the material to be shattered is placed on an anvil stone and struck from above with a hammerstone. These methods are referred to as direct percussion. An alternate procedure is indirect percussion.

Here, the tip of an antler or bone punch is placed on the part of the objective piece, while the opposite end of the punch is struck with a hammerstone. The force of the blow is conveyed through the punch to the point on the objective piece from which a flake is to be removed. This method is executed by an individual or by two persons working together, see below, left.

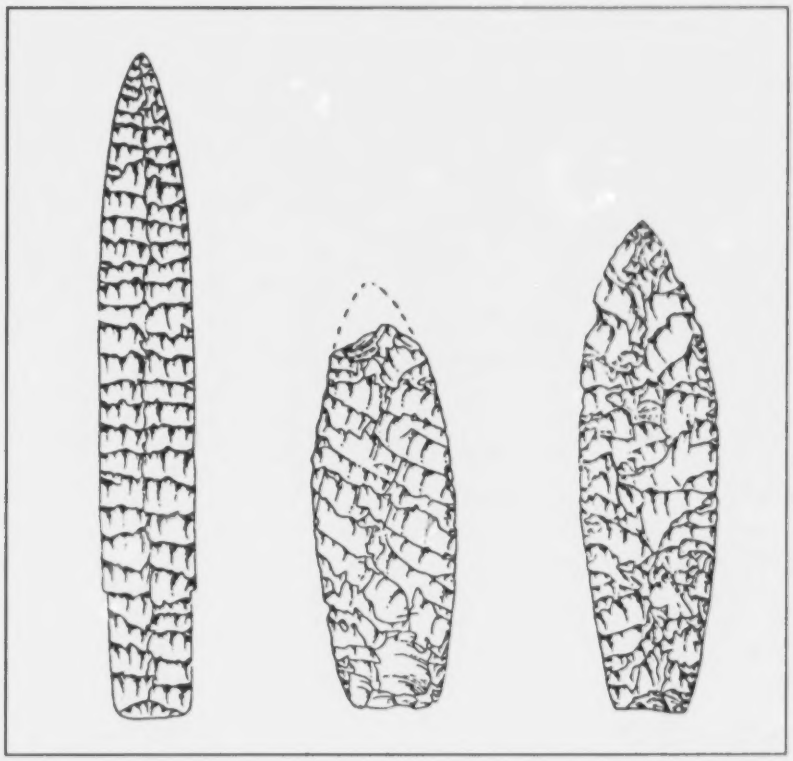
Early people initially roughed out some artifacts, notably projectile points, by the percussion method and then thinned and finished them by pressure flaking. Pressure flaking involves the removal of chips by pressing a pointed piece of antler against the edge of the objective piece.

Two methods of pressure flaking are recogi ized: free-hand and the punch technique, page 52. The punch technique appears to have been used in the fluting of spear points, see previous page, and in the production of prismatic blades – the elongated, parallel-sided flakes from which a variety of tools is manufactured.

Early Precontact peoples developed great skill in freehand pressure flaking, as shown in the flaking patterns on their projectile points. The illustrations on page 52 show the ladder, ribbon, and irregular patterns that result from freehand pressure flaking. The flake scars are shallow, and considerable control and coordination is needed to produce them.



Free-hand pressure flaking sharpens a stone point, while chest-punch pressure flaking hones a spear tip.



Ladder-style flaking pattern is carved on an Early Precontact stone spear point, top, an irregular-style flaking pattern on an Early Precontact stone spear point, centre, and a ribbon-style flaking pattern is used to hone an Early Precontact spear point, bottom.

Of course, projectile points comprised only one element of the ancient tool kit. A whole array of tools with different functions make up the artifact assemblages. For the most part, people fashioned these by striking flakes and blades from flint or chert, and shaping them by pressure.

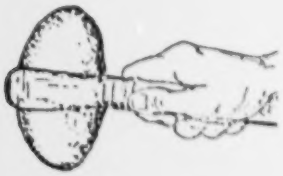
This stone knife is believed to have been produced by the chest-punch method.

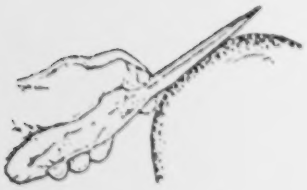
Copper Technology

Although stone tool technology is part of the lives of Precontact Manitobans for some 11,500 years, it appears to have not been the only means of producing tools and implements. Copper artifacts of one kind or another, most common in the Middle Precontact Period between 3000 and 1000 BC, probably were known to residents of Manitoba for some 7,000 years. The copper, worked into every day tools, sometimes was fashioned into ornaments. Tools include spear points of various shapes, knife blades, crescent-shaped objects, awls, fish hooks, and harpoons, see below. Ornamental items include bracelets and beads. Metallurgical analyses of certain Manitoba specimens show them to be 99.5 to 99.95 per cent pure copper, with only very small traces of other elements.

Copper, mined in the Lake Superior Basin, also came from mines along the north shore of Lake Superior. Most copper came from thousands of mining pits in the Keweenaw Peninsula on the south shore and from Isle Royale, situated opposite the present city of Thunder Bay.

Copper artifacts of the Middle Precontact period are a chisel (A), awls (B,C), punches (D,E), harpoons (F,G), spear points (H,L), knife (M), "crescents," probably knives (N).





A piece of copper is shaped by the cold-hammering method.

It is believed that the basic shape of most artifacts is achieved by a combination of cold hammering and annealing, see illustration at left. The metal is heated long enough to prevent it from becoming brittle. While this may be true in most instances, recent studies indicate that for certain later specimens manufacture is achieved by hot forging, the heating of metal to a temperature above 1,000°C but below the melting point of copper (1083°C).

Ceramic Technology

Around 500 BC, the inhabitants of Manitoba adopted a new technology, the manufacture of cooking vessels out of clay. These fire-resistant ceramic pots proved to be water- and rodent-proof, and well suited for food storage.

By definition, ceramic objects are household vessels – bowls, plates, and pots – made of baked clay. In manufacturing, a non-plastic material such as sand, crushed rock, plant fibres, feathers, shell, or crushed pottery fragments called grog, is mixed with the clay to counteract excessive shrinkage during drying and firing. Without this tempering agent, the vessel cracks or breaks during firing.

Precontact Native people constructed pots by modelling or coiling. Modelling involves shaping a mass of clay with the hands into a rough approximation of a vessel. Potters then hold a smooth stone, or anvil, inside the emerging vessel, and use a flat wooden paddle to beat the clay against the stone.

To construct a coiled vessel, potters form the prepared paste into long thin rolls, or ropes, illustrated on page 56. They place these rolls either one on top of the other or in a spiral form on top of a disc punched out of clay. Then they shape the pots by working on the interior with a curved tool.

This process has the advantage of ensuring a certain degree of uniformity of wall thickness, and it permits the use of less plastic clay. On the other hand, it is slow work, and great care has to be taken to ensure that the bonds between the coils remain firm and free of air bubbles. Otherwise the pot breaks at these junctures during firing. Paddling, as described above, is occasionally used to aid in bonding the coils and to shape the vessel.

It appears from archaeological investigation that people used net bags either in the shaping process, or for suspending vessels above the ground while they dried in the sun. The fabric, or net, is impressed into the wet clay of the vessel being paddled during construction. Later, the fabric net is pulled away or burned from the pot. The roughened surface is then smoothed or brushed with grass or twigs to even out irregularities. Occasionally a clay coating, or slip, is applied. A slip is a soup-like suspension of clay in water that is

Women shape and thin a pot with the "paddle-and-anvil" method, right, and construct a pot with the "coiling" method, left.

spread thinly and evenly across the vessel. People required considerable technical knowledge to produce a slip that would stick to the pot without peeling or cracking, and then harden at nearly the same temperature as the clay in the vessel.

While the clay is still soft, and before the vessel is dried and fired, potters embellish the neck and rim with cord-wrapped, pointed or carved objects, and twisted or braided cords. These applications produce motifs and designs that are interpreted by archaeologists as decorations and therefore expressions of decorative art. Unfortu-

nately, this interpretation is at best an educated guess. The motifs and designs may be symbols whose significance or meaning is often unknown.

The vessel, left to dry completely in the sun, then is placed in a hot fire to bake it hard. The firing process dehydrates and even melts some of the clay particles so they fuse together to form an impervious structure.

The great skill and technical knowledge required to select and prepare the clay, blend the paste, construct, decorate, dry, and fire the vessel is rewarded with an elegant and functional product.

Rock Paintings

Scattered throughout the Canadian Shield are rock paintings, or pictographs. Although some of these were created during Postcontact times, they represent a tradition that extends well back into the Late Precontact Period. It is generally believed among Native people of the Norway House district that early people painted with ochre, an iron oxide occuring naturally in concentrated deposits. Ochre, which ranges in colour from light orange-red to deep brown-rust, is mixed with isinglass, obtained from inside the sturgeon, to make a paint. The Cree call this substance ***wanaman***.

The paintings depict humans, animals, mythic creatures, and a wide range of geometric and abstract figures. There is evidence that the painters are the forebears of the Cree and Ojibwe people, who live in the province today. Some images can be matched with symbols occurring on birchbark scrolls of the Ojibwe Midewiwin or Grand Medicine Society. As many paintings occur in traditional Cree territory, Cree probably produced them. Explanations and interpretations of some of the paintings provided by Cree and Ojibwe elders attest to the Cree and Ojibwe origins of the work.

It is common for anthropologists and archaeologists to categorize rock paintings as art, specifically as rock art. This is incorrect if the definition of art as stated earlier is followed. The function of these rock surface paintings has nothing to do with creating aesthetic pleasure or decorating something.

Rather, the paintings are symbols, whose significance lies within some other facet of culture. Elders explain that some of them served as guides to mark points in time, foreseen by visionaries. The paintings directed people to the right path in life as given by the Creator to the first human to walk the earth. Other rock paintings

Rock paintings serve as guides to mark points in time seen in visions to direct people to the right path in life.

are considered to be love medicine. An elder from the east side of Lake Winnipeg related this story, printed in the magazine ***Zoolog*** (1967).

> *An old man might want a girl. He would get some part of her, even one hair off her head. He would then go into his tent and speak out loud, in the same manner as though the girl were right there with him. He spoke words of love. This caused her to go crazy for him. He then slept and dreamed. He would then dream of an animal that would help him in his romancing. The dream had to be real and not just imagination or making it up. Under these conditions when the figure was painted onto the rock, it was permanent. If it was made up, it soon washed off.*

A person from the same area indicated that certain paintings are considered hunting medicine: "A person would dream of the animal [that he intended to hunt] and if that dream were real, and not just made up, the person would get power from the animal."

Other paintings are related to curing practices.

> *These gravings that you see up the river here; those gravings that were made by old people long time ago. Those were the people that had power to do this. That's why now it stays on and doesn't wash off. That is why it stays on – because they had the power to do it.*

> *Sometimes see, old people there even the young people there you know would put about that much tobacco in the water. Then you just sort of talking to it, you ask that graving to give you the power to heal this. So, well, it's said it takes quite a time before this happens. You've got to be very sure to believe this. If you don't believe this, you are just doing this for fun. It doesn't work.*

Traditional Native people today treat the paintings with respect. They place offerings of tobacco on ledges or in the water to acknowledge the spiritual power of the paintings and the small beings – the ***memekwesiwak*** – who live or have lived in that particular place.

The rock paintings have an important place in the spiritual beliefs and conduct of traditional Native people. It is unfortunate that non-Native people have described them as art, because uninformed persons have judged them to be childish and primitive, and the artists unskilled. This is similar to saying that a written English sentence is bad art because the motifs, designs, and arrangements do not compare aesthetically with the Mona Lisa. The rock paintings are symbols intentionally unembellished, whose actual functions and purposes go well beyond those of decorative art.

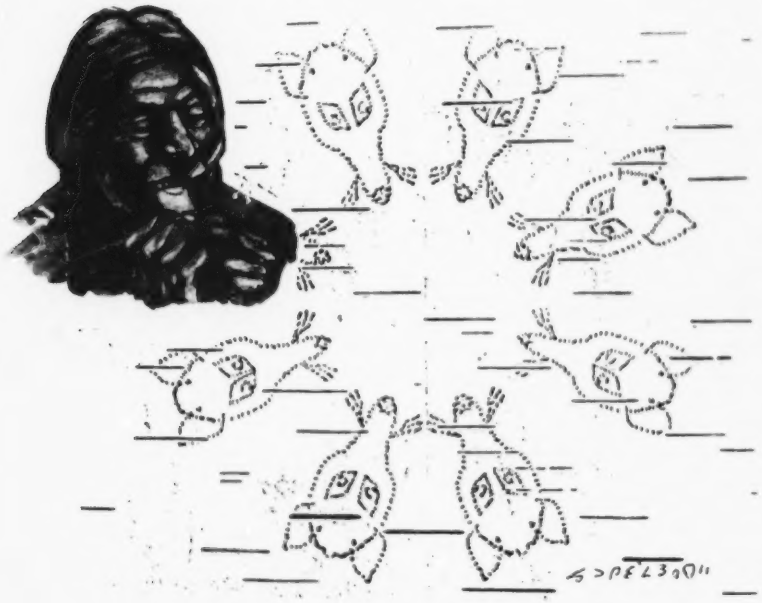
Birchbark, Quillwork, and Beadwork

Birchbark Biting

Birchbark biting is a pastime among Cree and Ojibwe women. They folded down and folded again pieces of peeled bark approximately 9 cm x 13 cm, then bit it to form precise patterns. Traditionally, women did birchbark biting for amusement and pleasure. It heightened the enjoyment of everyday life. To use the definition of art, it is therefore a good example of true artistic expression.

The technique also explored the development of new decorative designs, the resulting artifact forming a pattern for beadworking on kneebands, headbands, and shirts. It proved well suited for this purpose because it produced two-sided bilateral symmetry. In the Flin Flon-Beaver Lake area of northern Manitoba and Saskatchewan, Cree women used to hold contests to see who could make the best designs.

The artistic nature of birchbark biting continues to the present day, in the sense that bitings are produced for sale, just as a landscape



Birchbark biting enables craftspeople to produce a wide range of decorative designs.

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painting might be. Modern birchbark bitings are often framed for hanging on walls to beautify a residence, which is consistent with our definition of true art.

Porcupine Quilling

The use of coloured porcupine quills to decorate bark and leather is unique to the Native peoples of North America. Its closest counterpart is caribou hair, used by indigenous people of Siberia, Alaska, and Greenland. Quills became an item to trade with people who lived beyond the natural range of the porcupine.

A single porcupine possesses between 20 thousand and 40 thousand quills, which measure between 1.5 cm and 3 cm in length, and vary in thickness. Craftspeople use the finest quills for delicate embroidery, while the coarser ones are applied to larger surfaces, such as jacket fronts. They employ four techniques: weaving, sewing, plaiting, and wrapping. The individual quills may be either left in their natural white and black-tipped state, or dyed a variety of colours with dye made from certain barks, roots, flowers, and berries. To soften quills for easy use, they are soaked in water.

Probably the best documented Native quillwork from Early Postcontact Manitoba comes from the southern parkland region of the province. Decorative paint and quillwork designs on clothing are similar to those produced by woodland dwellers living to the east. Motifs comprised rectangles, circles, triangles and parallel straight lines. Combined into geometric compositions, these motifs often featured bilateral, symmetrical arrangements.

During the 19th century, large circles on the fronts of men's shirts became popular not only in the parkland region but also throughout the northern plains. Netted quill wrapping, decorative perforations of hide clothing and loom-woven quillwork, in conjunction with painting, appear to have been influenced by counterparts from the north and from the Great Lakes region – further examples of the long-standing cultural exchanges that are typical during the more than 11,000 years of Native history in southern Manitoba.

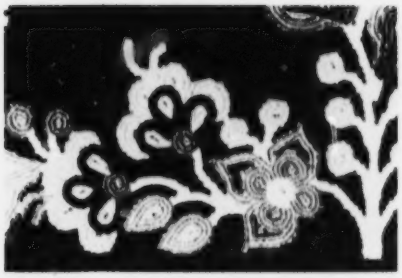
Quill-weaving became firmly established in the lives of Cree, Ojibwe, and Metis women of the Red River area, during the Middle and Late

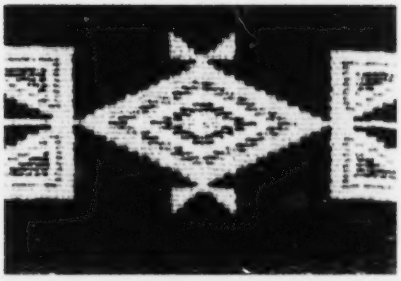
A Plains shirt is decorated with a large circle of porcupine quillwork.

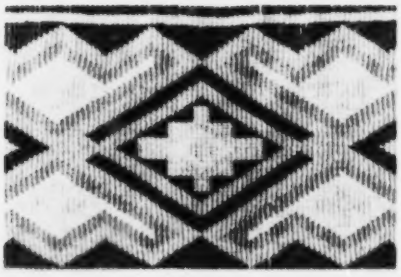
Postcontact periods. They frequently applied quillwork to epaulets and bands on hide frock coats and on pouches – particularly firebags – in which men originally carried flint and steel for fire-making and, in later times, shot and tobacco. Quill-weaving also decorated household items such as napkin rings, pin cushions, and needle cases.

Beadwork

Beadwork is probably the form of Native artwork most familiar to the public. The most common style is floral, which is believed to have originated in French Canada, and diffused westward. The floral motifs and designs may have been initially incised into birchbark containers, in an experimental way, and subsequently applied to other articles using different media, including glass beads.







Outside influences, such as the floral pattern, changed traditional Native beadwork designs.

Beadwork flourished during the mid-19th century (Late Postcontact Period), when Indian and Metis women supplemented the traditional painted quill and birchbark-incised geometric forms with floral embroidery. The technology and patterns, obtained at the Christian missions both directly, through instruction, and less directly through imitation of designs, appear on European goods and artifacts. It has been suggested that the floral prints on clothing brought to Manitoba by the Scottish and English wives of fur trade company officers also provided patterns for Indian and Metis beadwork. As time went on, the arrival of other European ethnic groups – Norwegians at Norway House and other Scandinavians, Swiss, Germans and French – also provided a varied source of patterns for Native beadwork. The natural, homegrown proved important inspirations of art: local flowers, plants, and berries.

The Red River Metis became especially renowned for beadwork. These people shared diverse cultural backgrounds – French, Scottish and English on their fathers' side, and Ojibwe, Cree or other Indian nations on their mothers' side. The result: a distinct ethnic group that existed in its own right. In due course, they developed a distinctive artistic style. The excellent beadwork of the Red River Metis led them to be called the Flower Beadwork People by Indian contemporaries.

Buffalo hunting activities took them far and wide, bringing them in contact with other peoples, including souvenir-hunting American and British travellers and tourists. Interestingly, the latter preferred to purchase articles from "real" Indians rather than the Metis; unknown to them, the Metis made the objects and sold them to the Indians for resale. Once again, Native people found themselves performing the role of middlemen – this time in commercial trade.

As a result of Metis movements and migrations over the northern plains of what is now western Canada, Metis

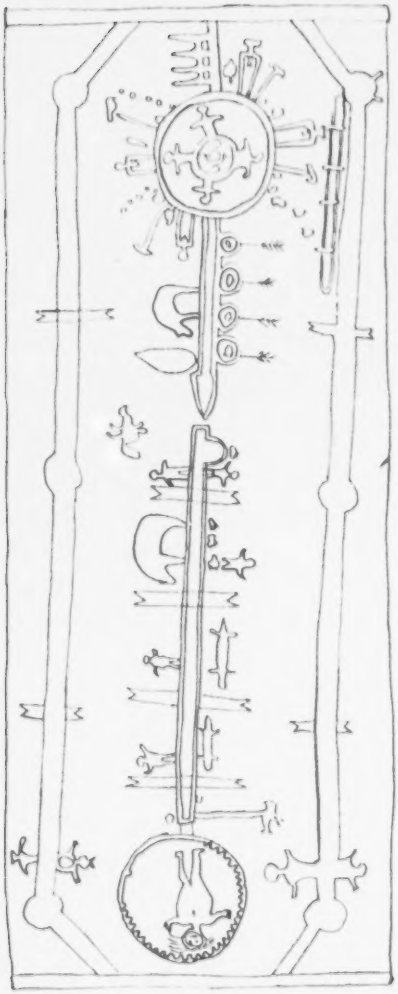
- artwork influenced virtually every Indian nation on the northern plains and in the Northwest Territories
- promoted the widespread trade of crafts
- intermarried with Indian nations throughout the prairies

Distinctive artistic beadwork styles develop from diverse cultures.

The overall historical development of Metis art went full circle: from the initial traditional expressions by Indian women, to elaboration by Metis daughters and granddaughters, to yet further inspiration of other Native women – years later and many kilometers away.

Woodland Style Art

The Woodland Style of Painting



Pictography on a birchbark scroll symbolizes information about origins, medicines, migrations, and rituals.

The Woodland style of painting, developed during the Modern Period of Native history and inspired by traditional sources, owes its origins to Norval Morrisseau, or Copper Thunderbird, an Ojibwe from Lake Nipigon in northern Ontario. This so-called Woodland style evolved in the 1950s and 1960s in response to the threat of cultural disintegration under the weight of Euro-Canadian civilization. The preservation of the traditional teachings of the Ojibwe and the Cree, by way of writing and graphic art, evolved entirely within the Native community itself. The style is called "Woodland" because it originated in the forest region of northern Ontario.

The Ojibwe term for this art, ***mijiwe-izhijiganan***, literally means "made with hands." The broader implication, as one recent writer put it, is that it means "something special, not necessarily practical and certainly not for commercial purposes." This definition of art coincides well with the one presented earlier. On the other hand, the purpose of Woodland painting went far beyond the creation of aesthetic pleasure and beauty; indeed, the art became a major factor in Native cultural revival and revitalization.

There are 3 original sources of graphic style and subject matter of Woodland art

- birchbark scrolls
- rock paintings
- stained glass windows

The scrolls are "books," or memory charts, that contain information associated with the Midewiwin, or Grand Medicine Society, of the Ojibwe. The members of the Midewiwin, a society that exists today, are healers, or medicine people, in the old tradition. The symbols on the scrolls convey information about the history of their origins and migrations, medical information (***materia medica***) and rituals of the Ojibwe nation and the Midewiwin. A reproduction of a portion of a scroll is shown at left.

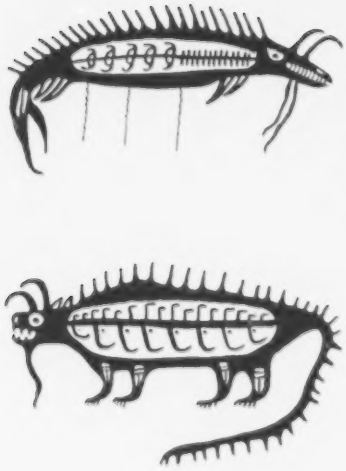
There are several recurrent motifs in Woodland art: x-ray, ovoid shapes, radiating wavy lines, single and multiple waving lines, parallel straight lines, ribs, straight and curved lines, and circles. These motifs symbolize stories.

The x-ray motif, on page 69, depicts internal organs and anatomical structures of animals and people. A very good explanation of the x-ray motif is provided by Andreas Lommel in his book entitled *Shamanism: The Beginning of Art.*

> *The X-ray style is without doubt an expression of the shamanistic view current among the early hunters that animals could be brought back to life from certain vitally important parts of the body. The mere portrayal of these vitally important parts of the lifeline brought about the resuscitation or increase of animals. Representations of animals were not merely pictures but contained the animals' vital substance. An increase in their numbers was brought about by touching up the pictures or by performing religious and magic rites in front of them.*

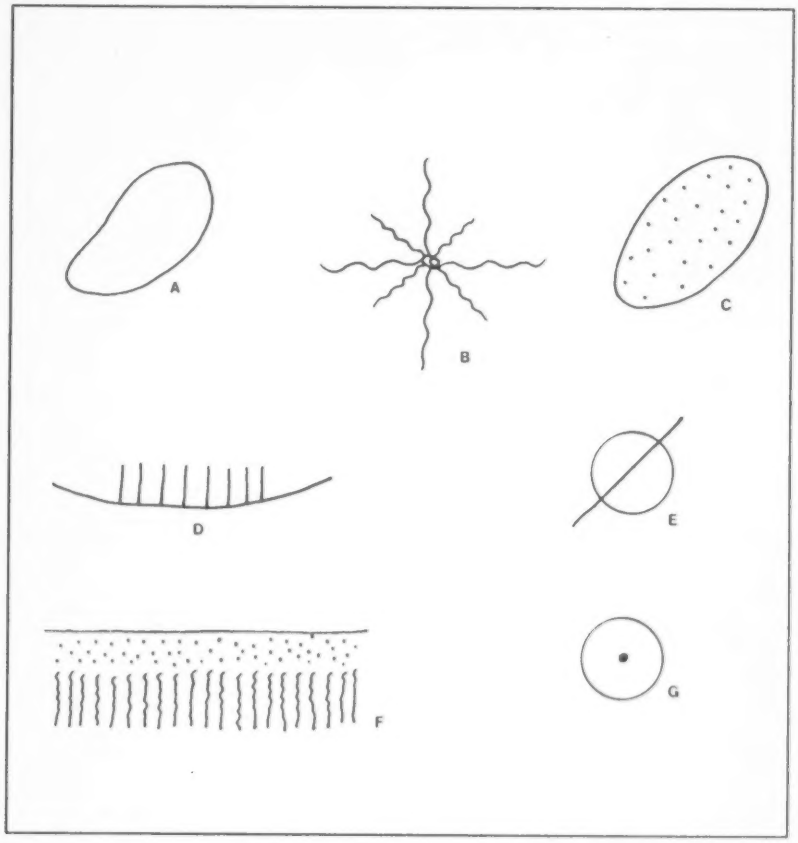
Ovoid shapes on page 68 are filled with either flat, opaque colour, an artistic rendition known as cloisonism, or additional motifs. These additional motifs are of four kinds

- **anatomical** – stylized muscle, bone, tendon or nerve
- **sacred** – for example, dots to represent sacred places in the Midewiwin birchbark scrolls
- **narrative** – forms convey an important part of the overall story, for example, a fish in the stomach of a fishing loon
- **decorative** – markings that are entirely of the artist's own choosing



Two examples of the x-ray motif in Woodland art show the Snake Sturgeon, top, and the ribs of Misshepeshu, the Under Water God, below.

Sometimes these internal details are painted. As is to be expected, this infilling of ovoid shapes has cultural meaning of its own. Specifically, it reflects the Ojibwe view that internal, rather than external, reality is of prime importance. Thus, within the human body are the vital organs, such as the brain or stomach, and these are often represented by the radiating wavy line motif. The dots stand for things that are sacred, such as the megis seashell which appeared in the western sky and guided the Ojibwe several centuries ago from their earlier homeland on the east coast of North America. Red dots may represent the red-hot stones used to create steam in the purifying sweat lodge.

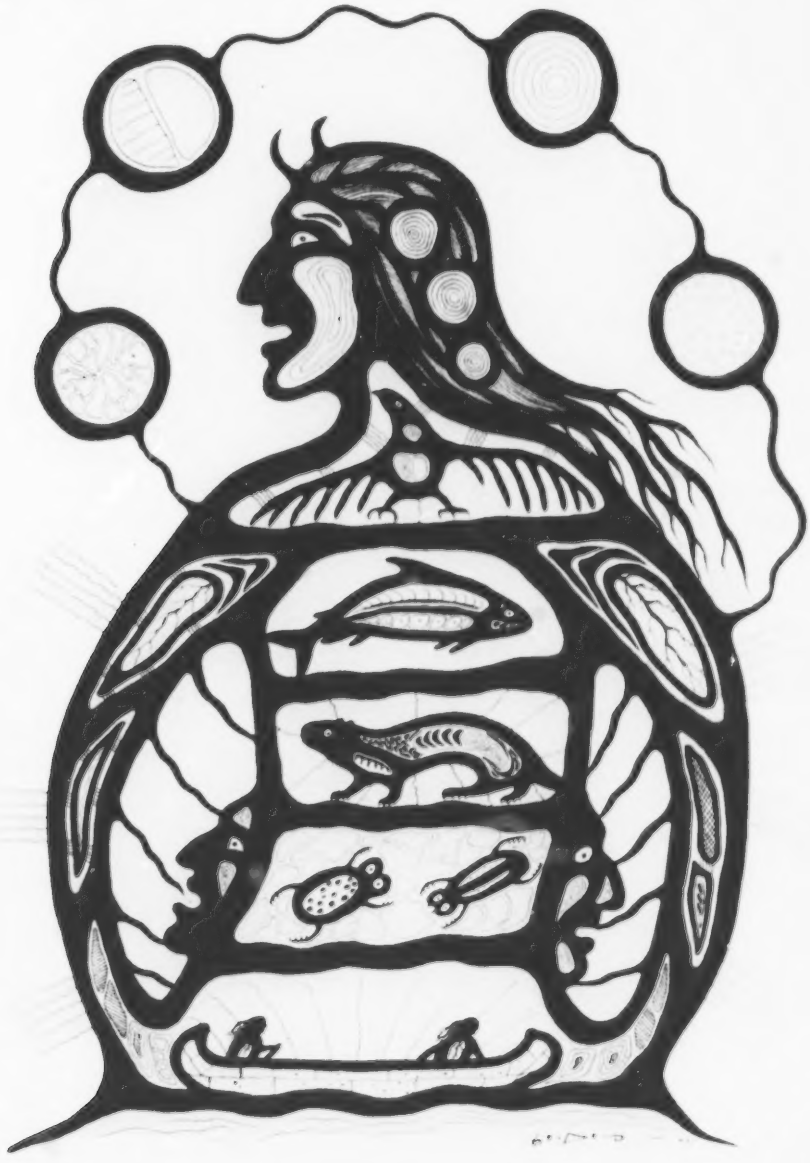


Traditional pictograph motifs in Woodland style are: basic oval (A), radiating wavy lines (B), oval with dots (C), parallel straight lines (D), circle with oblique line, signifying opposites (E), lines and dots, representing "medicine lodge" (F), circle with dot, signifying "spirit" (G).

The parallel lines may also possess a variety of meanings – the number of persons in a canoe or children in a family. Curved and straight lines derive from things in nature such as gnarled and straight tree trunks. The circle comes from the sun and the full moon. The circle, in fact, symbolizes a variety of things in Ojibwe experience: femininity, continuity, perfection, completeness, the soul or life force, death, if filled in with black, life, if filled in with white.

Elaborations on the circle are also symbolic – a dot in the centre means "spirit"; four rays emanating from it represent the Great

72



Artist Carl Ray's example of the "narrative" motif in Woodland Art features the "stratified" images in the central area, representing the chain of creation.

Source: Ray Carl. Untitled. McMichael Canadian Art Collection. 1975.

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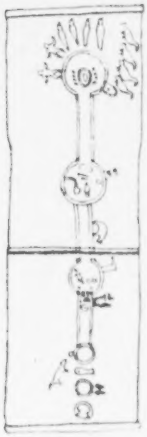
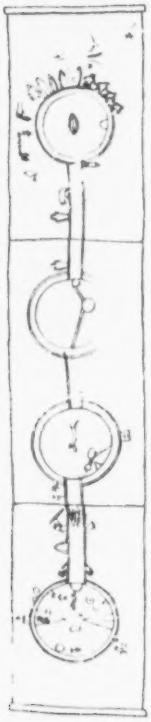


These Midewiwin scrolls make use of the circle which symbolizes the soul or the life force.



Spirit. A circle within a circle represents the eye, while Norval Morrisseau's adaptation of a diagonal line running through a circle stands for opposites such as good and evil or day and night. Circles are a conspicuous element in the Midewiwin scrolls, illustration at left. They are an important source of contemporary art motifs.

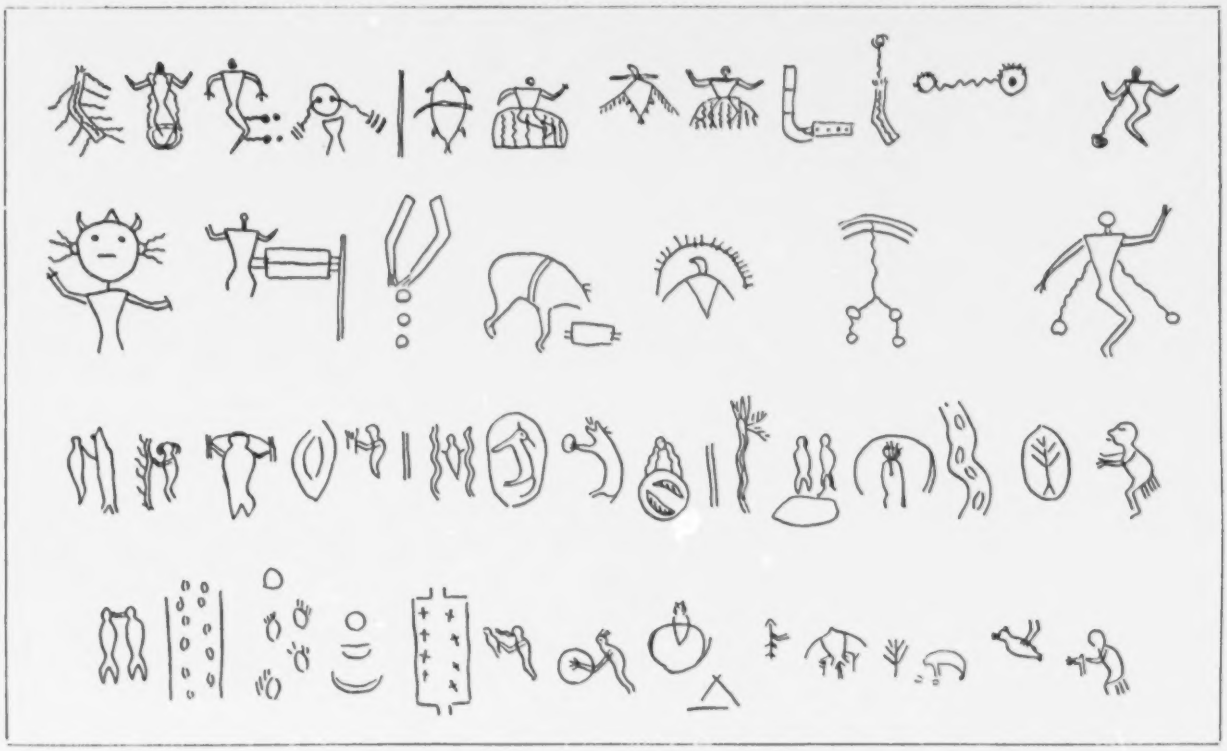
An interesting motif, again deriving from the scrolls, is the zig-zag, or waving line. Depending on the subject that is being depicted, one or more waving line(s) represent(s) healing power, speech, seeing, or singing. Parallel waving lines, see illustration on page 71, denote receipt of magic influence, when shown in conjunction with a human figure, or drifting snow or rain. These variations have been incorporated by Woodland artists.

One of the best-known Woodland-style artists from Manitoba is the late Jackson Beardy, a Woodland Cree from Island Lake.

Other contemporary Manitoba artists have departed from the Woodland style, but continue to reflect elements of their cultures, along with western European aesthetic traditions, in their art. These include painter Robert Houle, whose work ***Warrior Shield for the Lubicon*** is reproduced on the poster entitled **A Continuing Artistic Tradition**. Houle, of Ojibwe ancestry, studied at the University of Manitoba, where he completed a Bachelor of Arts (art history) in 1972. Later, he received a Bachelor of Education (art education) at McGill University in 1975. In 1989, he served as artist-in-residence at the Winnipeg Art Gallery.

During this period, Houle produced four paintings in response to Manitoba's environment. Entitled ***The Place Where God Lives***, they provide insight into this province as a cultural universe. In the mythology of the Saulteaux Indians, an island in the Narrows of Lake Manitoba is thought to be the dwelling place of God, or Manitou. It is called ***Manitowapah***, hence Manitoba.

Maxine Noel is another Manitoba artist, who won recognition for her work. Born on the Birdtail Creek Dakota Reserve, Maxine trained as a legal secretary after attending boarding school. During an interim directorship at the Ininew Friendship Centre in



Four Ojibwe songs are represented pitographically. Note the wavy lines that emanate from and between human figures.

Modern Manitoba Artists

Cochrane, Ontario, she displayed some of her drawings, and received encouragment to take an advanced design course.

Maxine first exhibited at Toronto's Thompson Gallery in March, 1980. She has since participated in many exhibitions in Canada and the United States, and established herself as a capable business woman in the art world. Maxine uses gauche on paper, stone lithography, silk screen, etching, and cast paper to create universal themes of motherhood, love, and peace. ***The Red Robe,*** for example, shows a Native woman gazing across the horizon, standing tall and in command of her surroundings.

Craft Guilds and Cooperatives

In addition to the work of visual artists such as Beardy, Houle, and Noel, there appeared in recent times another Native art scenario in Manitoba – the handicraft movement. Guilds or cooperatives formed during the 1960s to

- assist in preserving traditional crafts
- set standards for quality
- ensure that the craftspeople received a fair price

The concept of the guild – a cooperative working situation in which a number of craftspeople came together at a common workplace – is not new since in traditional hunter-gatherer societies much of the work is shared. Contact with Europeans failed to create highly individualistic societies, and certain labour processes remained communal. In some instances, Europeans encouraged cooperative efforts at mission-sponsored and residential schools in northern regions. This enabled young girls to be formally instructed in group sewing classes to produce marketable crafts sold in southern centres to raise money for missionization. As early as the 1840s, Methodist missionary James Evans established a short-lived cottage industry at Norway House, where women produced a variety of items.

It is clear from early sources that both cooperative activities and individual trade occurred at trading posts and stores. Norway House, one of the busiest areas in terms of production, became an important supply depot for fur brigades travelling to western Canada. This community and others situated along the eastern side of Lake Winnipeg produced saleable items for tourists who travelled on the lake in summer.

In general, Native people still used the articles offered for sale to the non-Native tourists – moccasins, mittens, jackets, and belts. Some goods, however, they made especially for souvenir purposes, such as small-scale replicas of sleds, canoes, and snowshoes. Although they manufactured these products for a money market, craftspeople still used domestic ways of production to supply raw materials.

This is particularly true of hide goods involving a division of labour by gender – men hunted the animals, while women prepared the

hides. Production of hides is seasonal, depending on the local availability of moose, deer, and caribou.

Craftspeople incorporated both Native and store bought materials and technology. For example, needleworkers used sinew and silk thread for sewing. They combined porcupine quills with silk thread and bead embroidery to decorate hide clothing lined with stroud or flannelette. In general, women hand-stitched these garments, although they used sewing machines when available.

In more recent years, Indian and Metis Friendship Centres often acted as the retail outlets for goods produced by guilds or co-operatives, including clothing and small souvenirs. They concentarated on beaded mukluks, moccasins, vests, parkas, bags, hats, mitts, and gauntlets. Many of the souvenir-type products – beaded and fur-trimmed powder boxes, beaded and furred miniature mitts and mukluks, beaded combholders, bow ties of beaded leather and fur, beaded and fur-trimmed Native dolls – they manufactured from trimmings and waste materials. The production of these items involved a program of formal instruction of the women, many of whom relearned lost traditional skills such as beadworking and hide tanning. At the same time, they acquired pre-cut, standardized patterns, and sewing machines.

Today, most of the guild operations have been phased out or closed down. Instead, most Native women sell products directly to urban outlets such as the Canadiana Shop at The Bay, the Craft Guild of Manitoba, the gift shop at the Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature, or to antique stores such as The Curiosity Shop. Some reserves, such as those near Thompson and The Pas, own retail shops, and the Arctic Trading Post in Churchill draws much of its stock from a local cooperative of Native women.

MUSIC AND DANCE

FIDDLES, DRUMS, AND DANCES CREATE DYNAMIC CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

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Music

Introduction

There are two categories of human behaviour that are typically closely associated with one another: music and dance. In traditional Manitoba Native societies, dancing, invariably accompanied by music, often is performed at ceremonies.

Music, the art of producing significant arrangements of sounds, usually involves rhythm, pitch, and tone colour. Among precontact Manitoba Native peoples, music, like literature, was strictly oral, both in its expression and in its perpetuation down through the generations.

Native people used the two basic sources of music – the human voice, and musical instrumentation – separately or together. For the most part, traditional Native music is functional – it is an integral part of non-musical activities. Filled with magical, symbolic, metaphoric, and social significance, Native music is performed as part of a larger cultural activity. For example, people sang songs and chants during the conduct of certain games, gambling bouts, and healing sessions.

Music became indispensable to group rituals and ceremonies. Apart from its communal role, music either was sung or played simply for individual pleasure and self-amusement, such as a lullaby for a baby, or a love song for a sweetheart. Some Ojibwe sang songs in conjunction with the telling of certain stories.

Important sources of songs were dreams and vision quests. As appropriate, songs inspired by these experiences, people either kept secret or performed in public and passed on as a personal possession upon the death of the original owner. Songs sang in solitude included those performed by a boy during his vision quest.

In Manitoba, the universal musical instruments are the drum and the rattle. Variations on these are found, at any particular time, throughout the entire province. On the plains and in the southern boreal forest, people also used flutes or flageolets, primarily for self-entertainment and courting sweethearts.

By a code, previously agreed upon, a young Assiniboine playing his flute at a distance of a hundred metres, conveyed messages to his

The one-note whistle features prominently during a Sun Dance ceremony.

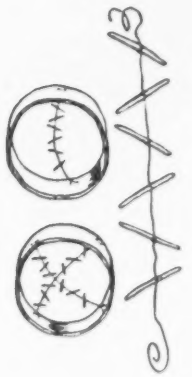
girlfriend inside her tipi without her family catching on. He expressed such ideas as, "I am here waiting for you," "I'll come again," "Meet me tomorrow."

Another wind instrument used by grassland/parkland peoples is the one-note whistle. This instrument has a place of prominence in the Sun Dance of the Manitoba Dakota and Plains Ojibwe. An instrument that people used only on the grassland/parkland region is the rasp – a piece of wood that had a series of a dozen or so notches carved into one edge. The musician ran another stick back and forth along the notches, producing a rasping sound in keeping with the rhythm of the song.

Drums

People produced and played three basic kinds of traditional drums

- circular tambourine-like hand drum
- large, tub-shaped dance or Pow-wow drum
- water drum



The drums of medicine people have rattling devices inside them.

Hand drums, either single- or double-headed, for example, have a hide striking surface that covers one or both sides of the circular hoop. They are played by a single person. Healers, or medicine people equipped their hand drums with rattling devices, at left, and painted them in special ways. They referred to them as medicine drums. Leaders of raiding expeditions carried war or chief's drums in the field.

Native people either rested the **tub-shaped drums** directly on the ground or suspended them above the ground surface from four poles, or hangers.

The **water drum**, unlike the tub-shape dance drum, is deeper than it is wide, and made from a hollowed out log with a solid, waterproof bottom. It is used primarily in the Medewiwin ceremonies of the Ojibwe.

The water drum is an excellent example of the multi-faceted symbolism that Ojibwe people attribute to ceremonial artifacts

- **wooden body** – symbolizes all plant life, whose existence must be respected
- **deerhide head** – represents and acknowledges in a respectful way the four-legged animals from which the people acquire many life-sustaining things
- **hoop** – holds the drumhead in place. It symbolizes the sacred circle or path that is followed in nature, for example, the seasonal cycle, and birth, growth, and death and also represents the movement of water on the earth's surface, and the sacred bond that exists between man and woman
- **water** – represents, inside the drum, the purifying, vital life blood that flows through Mother Earth

Just as there is a variety of Native drums, so there is a variety of drumsticks. They can be distinguished by the nature of the head – hard, semi-hard and soft; straight, curved, and hooped. On it could be a rattle, which is essentially a hide-covered hoop with small pebbles inside that rattle when the drum is struck.

An Ojibwe healer shakes a rattle and chants, while administering healing medicines or remedies.

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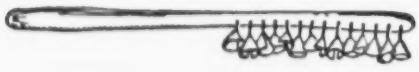
Rattles



Rattles are used either alone or with drums to aid dance. In fact, the dancer may also be the rattle player. The sound of the rattle serves to hold spectators' attention, and of course helps to fulfil the spiritual purpose of the ceremony.

The Ojibwe make can-shaped rattles from birchbark. They places corn kernels or wild rice grains inside the cylinders, which produces the desired sound when shaken, at top, left. Less common is the Ojibwe wooden rattle, made of two hollowed-out semi-spheres joined together at the circumference, at centre, left.

On the grasslands, the rattle head is round and made of stiffened rawhide. The Ojibwe make a variation on this type of rattle by punching a series of holes in the rawhide head at centre, left. The hooped rattle-type drumstick described above, found throughout the boreal forest region of Manitoba, is made and used by Ojibwe, Cree, and Dene peoples.

Not all rattles have hollow containers with objects inside them. The hoof rattle, popular among grassland peoples, features a row or cluster of closely-spaced animal hoofs (dew claws) or metal tinkling cones suspended from a wooden handle, at bottom, left.

The sounds from a variety of rattles hold the attention of spectators and fulfil the spiritual purposes of ceremonies.

Dance

Rhythm is defined as the recurrence or repetition of stress, beat, sound, accent, and motion. It usually occurs in a regular or harmonious pattern or manner. Native Manitobans typically produce rhythm by means of drums, rasps, and rattles. Musical rhythm is the essential stimulant to body rhythm, which expresses itself in dance. Jamake Highwater, an American Indian writer, describes it this way: "A series of rhythmic steps or body movements, usually performed to music."

Dancing is done individually or in groups. The steps and movements are typically patterned, and are done according to custom or tradition and within a certain limited range of acceptable variation. Even new dances, developed as part of a social or religious movement, have tended to be heavily influenced by the already existing repertoire of movements and steps.

When carried out communally, dancing is often a focus of public display and excitement because it is so highly visible. Its function is to enhance morale and group solidarity, or to draw the participants and spectators into a particular emotional state. Dancing is also a popular recreation. As part of a larger ceremonial complex, dancing usually calls for specialized clothing, body markings (paint) and handheld accoutrements.

Some dances highlight the differences and relations between the sexes; each sex has a particular dance or separate role within a given dance, and this dichotomy is a significant factor in courtship. And, certainly, dancing is a form of religious expression, or spiritual communication, in traditional Native culture (and notably absent in mainstream Judeo-Christian ceremonialism).

Dance is an effective communication medium because it tends to be contagious; onlookers at a dance often get the urge to do likewise. Beyond that, the dancers stir up emotions and ideas in the observers. By extension, the supernatural and animals can also be influenced by dance; "the imitation of an animal (essentially in movements, but also in costume) has an influence upon the animal itself. This practice, called homeopathic ritual, is the basis of most hunting and fertility rites."

The Pow-wow

Ceremonies involving singing, playing of musical instruments, and drumming have been conducted by Manitoba Native people since time immemorial. Today, traditional music and dance are performed in two situations

- during sacred proceedings where participants seek genuinely spiritual experiences, for example, the annual Sun Dance and the Midewiwin ceremony.
- for recreation and entertainment, when the general public is invited to attend, for example, the Pow-wow.

Drums beat and meaningful songs are sung at a Pow-wow: the heartbeat of a nation.

Heartbeat of the Indian Movement

The following descriptions of the Pow-wow are adapted from material written primarily by Native Manitobans on the occasion of the 1983 International Pow-wow held in Winnipeg. These descriptions provide eloquent testimony of the richness, colour, and vitality of contemporary Aboriginal ceremonialism.

The Pow-wow has become the heartbeat of the Indian movement. Every weekend throughout the summer, the pulsing tempo of drum groups reverberates across the plains. Men, women, and children from reserves across the continent, gather to celebrate one important aspect of Indian culture.

What is a Pow-wow? The word itself comes from an Algonquian word, ***pauwowtum***: he dreams. And a Pow-wow is still a ceremony that sets a person to dreaming of the old days, the old ways and, most of all, of the future.

A Pow-wow calls up the tempo of times past. In summer, tents and tipis converge on a campground and for three days and nights, the Pow-wow gathers strength. From the time the first tent is pitched, or the first participants arrive, the Pow-wow gains momentum, just as it did in the old days.

The Pow-wow is a healing, unifying ritual. It is a time of singing and dancing, feasting and laughing, crying and teaching, learning and loving. And by remembering the past, people celebrate the future with dancing and regalia.

As soon as the drum groups begin, dancers gather in full regalia. There are few tribal demarcations now; differences have all but disappeared. Singers chant the inter-tribal songs, and with the Grand Entry, the Pow-wow officially begins.

The Grand Entry

The Grand Entry, signalling the start of the Pow-wow, brings together singers, drummers, and dancers who participate in the celebration. It sets aside a special time for showing respect to various dancers and their styles of dancing, and is a time for remembering values, country, and Creator.

The Eagle Staff

The eagle staff is one of the oldest symbols, hearkening back to the days of the Dog Soldiers, valiant warriors of the plains. Originally, only the bravest and highest ranked among them carried the staffs.

The same recognition of valour exists today. Eagle staffs – flags of the First Nation(s) – receive the same respect that war veterans accord to the Canadian ***Maple Leaf,*** British ***Union Jack***, and American ***Stars and Stripes***. Staffs are carried into the Pow-wow by war veterans who have earned the right in battle, by those who have earned the honour in the eyes of the Pow-wow committee, or by owners of eagle staffs.

During a Pow-wow, the eagle staff plays a prominent role in the Grand Entry.

As eagles are an endangered species, their feathers are usually unavailable. Substitutes are used instead on the eagle staff which still is made in a traditional way. Feathers are attached singly to a long narrow strip of felt or thong. At the base of each are delicate white feather "puffs" – originally the fluffy feathers that grew at the base of the eagle's tail. The strip of feathers is then affixed at both ends to a slender pole. The magnificent result is the eagle staff – a fitting flag for the First Nations.

The host or designated drum uses a special song to bring in the dancers during the Grand Entry. Dancers are expected to carry themselves proudly, with dignity and respect for the eagle staff, and for the war veterans whom they follow. After all the dancers are in place, flags are raised or lowered (depending on the time of day) to the accompaniment of special songs – First Nations' anthems, and British, Canadian, and American flag songs. At times, veterans' songs may also be called for after the flag songs.

Most Pow-wows maintain the following order of entrance: eagle staffs together with American and Canadian flags lead the procession, followed by representatives of different reserves/organizations, and participants in various dance categories – traditional, grass, fancy, shawl, juniors, and tiny tots. An honourable Elder speaks the prayer for the day, and the Pow-wow begins.

Participants are filled with overwhelming feelings of pride and comfort as they stand around the drum listening to the singers' high-pitched, almost operatic, tones. Hearing this, one has to dance in

honour, to celebrate the customs of one's people. But whatever the songs, chants, or prayers mean to an individual, they will always be the lifeblood of the First Nations' culture. For without the beating of the drum and the singing of meaningful songs, the socializing known to First Nations people as the Pow-wow would not exist today. The Pow-wow is the very heartbeat of a nation.

Men, women, and children, who dance as a symbol of their culture, realize that today's singers are performing the old tunes, which have been passed on and which are a vital link to rich tradition. The songs retell tales of bravery, of pride, and of love lost and won. The songs relate to a way of life that has changed with time; singing the songs helps keep the memory of that way of life alive.

In the old days, people sang primarily for themselves rather than for the approval of an audience. Even now they sing for the spirits around them – not only the spirits housed in human form, but the spirits of all living creatures. Their music possesses a mystic, supernatural side which puts them intimately in touch with the natural world. Since time immemorial, music has maintained its joyous and celebrative side. People sing out of thanks and happiness. And it is this mood that reflects and guides a Pow-wow.

Songs sung in Pow-wow usually are modifications of ancient ones that have been handed down through the generations. Today, however, the words within the songs have almost been eliminated, to be replaced by vocables – round syllables that have no meaning. This evolution resulted when a First Nation adopted the music of neighbours or trading partners, without knowledge of their language.

Sometimes original choruses in the Aboriginal tongue alternate with passages of vocables. The vocable "language" is so much simpler that even drum groups comprising members from many different First Nations can perform songs from almost any area of the continent. The spirit and tune of the original songs are maintained, but words may be abandoned entirely.

And though the words have altered, the old song patterns remain the same. Songs are begun by a lead singer, with another singer close

behind to "second" him. The second begins the first line just before the lead singer finishes it. And, as the second reaches the middle of his line, the group joins in.

Dancers take their cue from the second. Only as he begins to sing do the dancers begin to dance. After the first chorus, dancers pause to "honour the drum" with long, low bows. And then the song process begins again. The song, sung three times in all, is known as "three pushups." Then comes the "tail" – a short encore, during which dancers and singers repeat the chorus, ending with a flourish on the last beat.

Drum groups at a Pow-wow begin each day with a perfect score of 200 points. But the judges – watching and listening at all times – deduct points for every error, slip, or infraction. Groups are judged on their professionalism. They must be present at every Grand Entry, or lose 100 points. A late set-up, or a tardy group member, causes the group to lose another 25 points. And an intoxicated or drugged member forfeits 100 points for the group.

All other points depend on the expertise with which the songs are performed. Group members must be exactly synchronized. All drummers must begin and end perfectly with the leader. Pace must change smoothly. If any member turns in a poor performance, the whole group is penalized. Ten points are deducted for any improper drum beats or breaks and loss of rhythm or voice in any song.

Groups must be adept at every kind of song: traditional, flag or trick. The trick song is especially challenging since the music will suddenly stop in mid-song, and every musician must catch and hold the pause exactly.

Traditional Dance

The signal is given to the lead drum, the song begins, and the Pow-wow is on. In position at the head of the Grand Entry, male traditional dancers greet each other with smiles and handshakes while carefully scanning the crowd for old comrades and new friends. Power, grace, poise, and humility are exemplified as dancers move in exact rhythm with the drumbeat.

A youth entering the dance circle for the first time is guided by an escort chosen from among spiritual or temporal leaders, or warriors. Always the first to appear in full regalia for the start of the day's events, the warriors' duties include picking up fallen eagle feathers and restoring them – in a special ceremony – to dancers from whose regalia they have dropped. Much revered by First Nations people, the eagle feather symbolizes unity and deep respect for all Creation. It points to the "one above all" as the Great Spirit, and great care is taken to keep the feather from touching the ground.

Closely following, and perhaps in reality leading the men, are the female traditional dancers. The beauty, strength, and perfect rhythm of the dancers are an inspiration to their families and communities, who respect the ancient traditions.

Traditional dance regalia is decorated with exquisite beadwork, and the bells that dancers wear follow precisely the rhythm of the song. Each movement is calculated and each individual style depicts the nature of the inner soul. The songs – telling of brave and good deeds – honour relatives, living or dead. Traditional dance and songs help to retain elements of value from the past, and encourage people to carry into the future that which they have learned to respect.

Always the last to leave the Pow-wow, male traditional dancers carry the eagle staff and flags from the arena. The good feelings engendered during the gathering also are carried into people's daily lives.

Hoop Dance

Long ago an elder told a story about the hoop dance, which carries with it a lesson for children. The elder, who called it "ring" dancing, or "loop" dancing, said that a certain young man was given a vision to guide him in life. The youth saw several rings spinning in the sky, descending to him. While Spirits sang a special song, the youth was told that each hoop stood for a difficulty he must pass through in order to fulfill his purpose in life.

After each victory he received a hoop and was shown how to overcome the next obstacle. When he had successfully passed through all the rings he found that when connected and used in a certain manner, the hoops formed many intricate patterns.

The circle, or hoop, symbolizes the unending circle of life. People are born and grow to old age. The elders tell us, "There is no death – only a change of worlds." All things move in a cycle and a person learns from the seasons and cycles of nature the message contained in the hoop. Those who master this dance give enjoyment to other people, and convey an important lesson about life.

Grass Dance

The Grass Dance is one of the oldest dances now performed at the Pow-wow. Traditionally, it was a warriors' dance performed only by members of the privileged Grass Dance Society. Although it is often called a war dance and does have certain features of a victory celebration; it also incorporates both animal and bird movements. Today, the Grass Dance is known by many names and is danced by many different First Nations. Although some elements of the original dance have been changed by various First Nations groups, the dance, songs, and outfits remain similar. Since there are no current war experiences to enact, each dancer uses his own favourite steps. If 20 different dancers perform, they probably dance 20 different styles.

Grass Dance headgear consists of brightly coloured porcupine and deer-hair roaches. Some dancers sport feathers or fluffy plumes attached to thin coil springs wrapped with ribbon or beadwork, which bounce and wave with their movements. Dance outfits – made from red, blue, black, yellow, and green materials – include breechcloths, with or without back flaps, decorative fringing, and colour-coordinated beaded headbands, harnesses, belts, cuffs, moccasins, and breastplates. The quality of work and aesthetic effect of these decorations play an important role in the Grass Dance.

The Grass Dance, which can be traced far back into history, is an interesting example of the evolution of a ritual into a popular dance. Although the meaning of the original symbolism may have been lost through time, the Grass Dance still retains elements of the original choreography. It appears that the Grass Dance, regardless of change, will survive.

Dancers of the Rainbow

Men's Fancy Dance

The exuberance of a Pow-wow is best expressed in colour – the colour of the fantastic feathered and beaded regalia that explode on stage during the dance. The dances are a festival of vigour and vibrancy, because of the beautiful outfits of the women and children, and the elaborate configurations of the "fancy feathered" men.

The men's rainbow plumage is an exotic challenge to the imagination. Each outfit is an extravagant mix of the brightest possible feathers and beadwork. The most distinctive item of the fancy-dance outfit is the bustle, a set of two circular or U-shaped configurations of feathers worn on the dancer's back. The matching set of beautifully coordinated coloured feathers reflects the owner's preference. Usually, the owner also has matching beaded armbands, cuffs, belt, sidedrops, moccasins and, at times, cape and breechcloth. Also included are leggings, bone breastplates, and any combination of fans, whistles, and twirlers, or whips. The complete outfit always includes the roach, or headpiece, made from deer and porcupine guard hairs.

The dance style itself matches the elaborate construction of the outfit. In the past, emphasis was placed on intricate footwork and body movement, but dancers began to elaborate on the style with faster tempos and dramatic spins. Today, with the tremendous popularity of Pow-wows, the number of good dancers has increased to a point where special "trick" songs have been introduced to help determine winners.

Trick songs stop almost anywhere, and dancers have to stop at exactly the same time. In the contest, dancers will do as many tricks as the rules allow. During the "shake," a particular kind of trick song, the drum tries to lose dancers by abruptly stopping in mid-song. But good dancers are at all times in control. They must know their songs intimately, because a missed beat or failure to stop on the final note would eliminate them from the big money.

The number of songs used in these contests has also increased in some Pow-wows, so dancers must be in excellent physical shape. As a result, fancy dancing is almost exclusively a young person's category. Nowhere is the individualism and innovation of the dancers more pronounced than in fancy dancing, and, as such, it is a symbol of the vitality of life itself.

Women's Fancy Dancing

Traditionally, Indian women reveal beauty in modesty. However, in a fancy dance, such as the Women's Fancy Shawl category, women dance most vigorously. Each woman wears a brightly-coloured satin-like dress, or a more traditional-styled buckskin outfit. But the primary element of her outfit is a colourful shawl with a long fringe. The shawl remains tucked under the woman's arm, and her overall bearing shows her modesty and pride. Her body is straight, her head held high, her braids often adorned with a single feather, beaded discs and pendants, or a headband.

Her feet, in beaded moccasins and leggings, seem to glide along with the drum beats. Her body moves in perfect harmony with the music. Even when the drum beats faster and faster, she is in perfect control. She is at all times proud and in tune with her body and the music.

Jingle Dress: A Welcome Dance

With a sound like leaves in the breeze, "jingles" gleam in the light, and the women of the Jingle Dress category dance into the circle. The solid colours of their dresses and their flashing smiles show something of the forceful, bright spirit their presence brings to the Pow-wow. Accompanied by appropriate songs with a strong, up-tempo drumbeat, they dance, and the air is filled with the swishing sharp sound of the metal cones – or "jingles" – attached to the dresses.

The Welcome Dance originated in the Northwestern Ontario woodland region in connection with feasts and celebrations of life. One elder from the area remembers seeing it for the first time as a young girl. Each spring, her grandfather called his people together and honoured them with a traditional feast, often accompanied by dancing and drumming. It was at such a feast that she wore her first jingle dress at the age of eight. For 60 years this Ojibwe tradition has been carried on by the people of this area.

The Jingle Dress has gained recognition and respect in a growing circle. It has become an important part of Pow-wow, bringing pleasure to audiences across Canada. As each year passes, young women of various First Nations borrow from the Ojibwe Nation the right

to wear the jingle dress. Neighbours, as far south as California, have adopted the jingle dress.

Originally made from tin cans, the cones were tiny; in recent years they have been made larger and have many variations. Individual dancers have elaborated on their regalia to suit their personal tastes. So far the Jingle Dress Welcome Dance has been exclusively for females, but now and again an individual male has, with the owner's permission, donned a jingle dress and strutted his stuff in front of an appreciative audience.

Metis Music and Dance

The roots of the Red River Jig come from a combination of Indian dance steps and French and Scottish jigs and reels.

In traditional Indian society, the music-dance combination was typically oriented toward spiritual and world-view matters. Even the contemporary Pow-wow of Indian people, while having a recreational function, has important cultural-revival and other emotional and psychological overtones that go far beyond the pursuit of entertainment and enjoyment.

In earliest times, the Metis took part in traditional Indian dances. When missionaries arrived, such participation fell out of favour because they deemed it improper for Christian Metis to be involved in "pagan" ceremonies. On the other hand, the social-type dances of European and French-Canadian origin were looked upon favourably by the clergy, and have remained popular up to the present.

Among the old-time (i.e., Late Historic Period) Catholic Metis and Protestant English mixed-bloods, church music in the form of hymns was used for veneration of the Christian God, but dance was not employed as part of the religious experience. Dance, and the music that went along with it, was for pleasure and enjoyment.

The Metis are of mixed heritage not only in the biological, or genetic, sense, but in the cultural sense as well. This mixture is expressed in many ways, not the least of which is in music and dance. For example, the fiddle, an instrument of European origin but typically home-made of birch and maple, was teamed up with the Indian dance drum. A pair of spoons struck against each other and the clapping of hands provided rhythm.

The dances – polkas, waltzes, quadrilles, reels, and jigs – were essentially of European derivation, but one very famous dance, the Red River jig, features a combination of Indian dance steps and French and Scottish jigs and reels. Jig steps also were blended into quadrilles, or square dances. Even the language employed in square-dancing was of mixed origin: ***à la main left*** replaced the fully French ***à la main gauche***, for example. Jigging competitions, often lasting all night, were held. M. Louis Goulet, a Metis, provides the following description of a late nineteenth-century dance session:

> *During the feast, there'd be a big singing contest and after that would come the dancing. Talk about every kind of reel and jig you can imagine! Fiddles, drums, accordions, guitars, jew's harps and mouth organs, anything was fine as long as it went along more or less with the rhythm. At a shindig like that it was always a contest to see who could play the best, who could dance the best, who could sing the best, who could wear through his moccasins first, who'd be the first to cripple up with cramps in the legs.*
>
> *If the house had a wood floor, it would be creaking under the steady rhythm of dancing feet. If there was no floor, which was usually the case with those winter houses, the bare ground took all the stamping from our moccasins and the spectators were forced out many times in the evening for a breath of air because the dust inside would be suffocating. I often think the Red River Jig (Oayache*

Metis fiddle making is an enduring tradition.

Mannin) was invented one evening like that when sometimes the only instrument was an Indian drum.

One night we were all jammed into Omichouche Godin's house in the Judith Basin on the Missouri River. The dance started. There was no wood floor and I don't remember any other instrument than an Indian drum. Some men were sitting on the ground around the drum, pounding away like mad to the rhythm of the Red River Jig while the dancing men and women took turns with wild enthusiasm. Spectators sat on the ground all around the room with their backs to the wall, almost completely invisible because of the dust and pipe smoke. The dancers kept time by clapping and snapping their fingers over their heads, adding an extra touch to the rhythm of their dancing feet.

Broken by pauses when we sang, the dancing went on into the wee hours of the morning.

Among the old-time Metis, just about any occasion was right for merry-making. The return to Red River from the annual summer buffalo hunt, New Year's Day and weddings were regarded as especially appropriate for celebration.

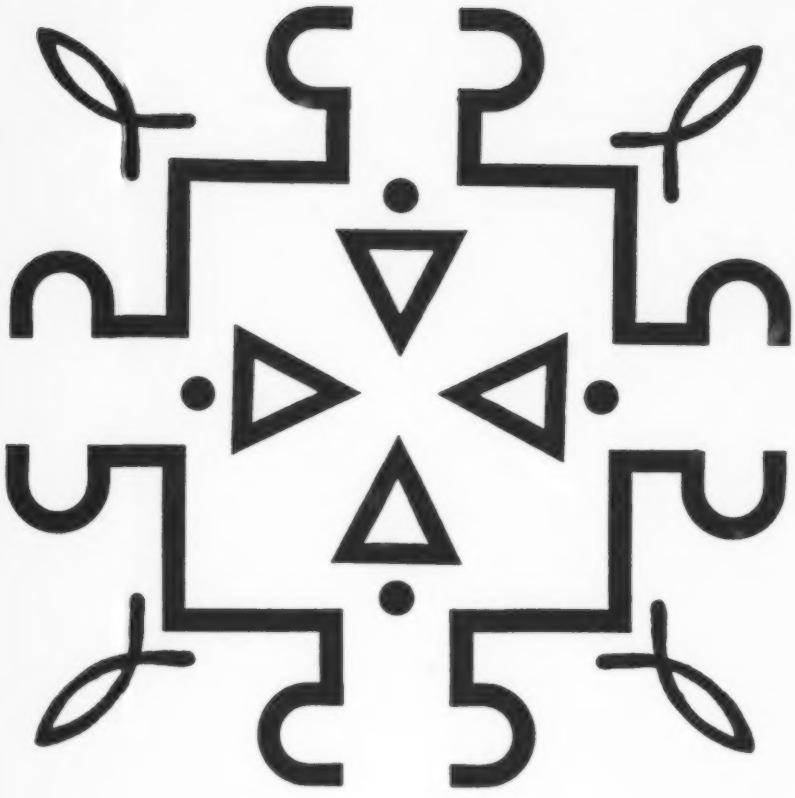
The fiddle, of course, is a key instrument in traditional Metis music and dance. However Metis fiddle-making is by no means a thing of the past; the tradition is carried on today by persons like Claude Ayotte of St. Boniface, Manitoba, who hand-crafted the excellent example illustrated at left. This fiddle, constructed in 1987, took some 500 hours to complete. The top is made of Sitka spruce; the underside is of birdseye maple; and the finger board was fashioned from palysander wood. The top and bottom edges of the main body are trimmed with gold braid, and the four tuning buttons near the end of the finger board are inlaid with mother of pearl.

Mr. Ayotte began making fiddles in 1980, and over the next 10 years he completed 16 of them. He has personally performed at such important cultural and heritage events as the Festival du Voyageur and Folklorama (Metis Pavilion). He has attended the Violin Makers Association reunions at the University of British Columbia several

times and won trophies and certificates for first, second, and third prizes for violin-making on these occasions. Mr. Ayotte's instruments were judged by three symphony orchestra musicians for tone, workmanship, and projection of sound. His fiddles are among the instruments used by Les Danseurs de la Rivière Rouge, the Ile-des-Chênes Fiddlers and the Mennonite Symphony Orchestra.

Today, old-time and Metis fiddlers and dancers have been joined musicians of a more contemporary genre. Ray St. Germaine, Edgar Desjarlais, and the group C-Weed are good examples of Manitoba Metis who have distinguished themselves in country-and-western and rock music. Len Fairchuk and many others carry on the tradition of old-time fiddling.

APPENDICES



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